BLOOD RUMORS:

AN EXPLORATION OF MEANING IN THE STORIES OF A CONTEMPORARY MENSTRUAL PRACTICE

Copyright @ 2002 by Laura K. Brown

BLOOD RUMORS:

AN EXPLORATION OF MEANING IN THE STORIES OF A CONTEMPORARY MENSTRUAL PRACTICE

ABSTRACT

This is a qualitative study about how meaning is made using the narratives of women who practiced menstrual extraction, analyzed from a philosophical perspective.

The inquiry is informed by process philosophy, metaformic theory, and a version of feminist existentialist phenomenology. Jungian studies, the evolution of consciousness theory and importantly, complexity theory as articulated by Morin also contribute significantly to this dissertation.

Menstrual extraction is a process whereby small groups of women use a specially-designed device to withdraw their menstrual periods, on or about the day they are due. This practice did not become widespread, but the idea quickly became popular. The groups, called self-help clinics, met together, outside the family, government or patriarchal institutions. The groups were founded on the feminist *conscious-raising* model.

Menstrual extraction is not an isolated case of changing menstrual practices in western culture; it is one

of many instances of a radical break with the western tradition of hiding and degrading menstruation.

Around the world and throughout time, stories about menstrual rituals have played foundational roles in cultures. In western culture only women menstruate, but in stories from other cultures, stones menstruate, the earth menstruates, the moon menstruates and males menstruate. In these cases, *menstruation* means *sacred bleeding*.

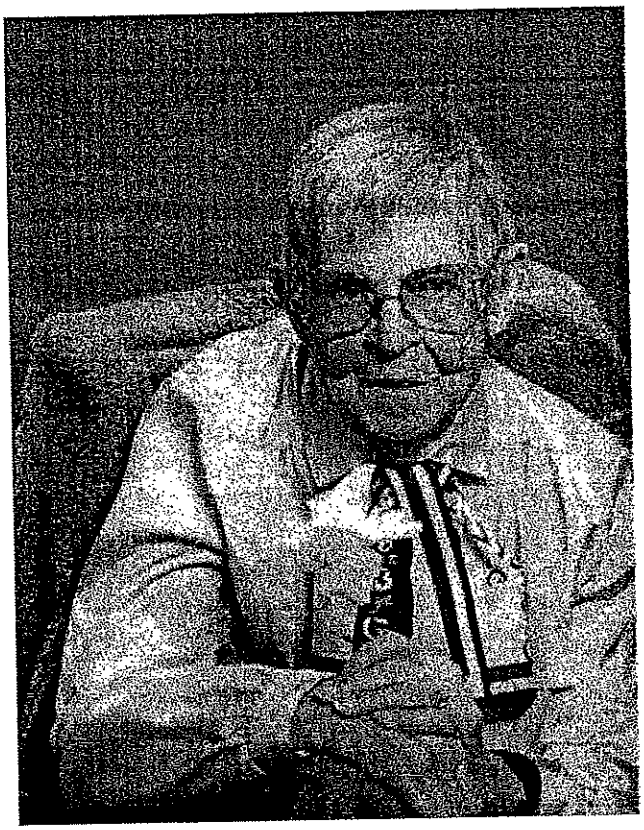
The interviews show that, consciously, menstrual extraction was a political act. By comparing the stories of menstrual extraction to cross-cultural stories of menstrual rituals, I found eighteen examples of ways that menstrual extraction corresponds to primal menstrual rituals that are foundational to human consciousness. I found that menstrual extraction played a primary role in the transformation of persons, things and places.

This inquiry could help to reestablish the relationship between menstruation and blood. This preliminary study may not meet the test of coherence, but it may meet the standard of speculative philosophy by evoking a new feeling about how menstruation is related to meaning-making.

Dedicated to

my great-grandmother

for teaching me to weave my own cloth



Sarah Lynn Worthington Stell
(August 4, 1892-December 17, 1990)

Acknowledgments

This dissertation is far from being an individual effort.

My family and friends showered me with love and support for years when I was too preoccupied to even say thank you. I have been propped up, underwritten and forgiven. I have had help and guidance at every phase. My people have been unflagging and generous. There appears to be no limit to their patience. I know there is no limit to my love and appreciation of them.

No student has ever had a more loving family or a more supportive family than I.

- My daughters, Cassidy and Leila, are my primary sources of learning.
- My sisters, Victoria Brown, for her philosophical insights and her ceaseless devotion. Shelby Coleman, without whom I would never have known I had a philosophy. Angela Booth, my baby sister who showed me that wisdom could be witty.
- My brothers, David Brown and Frankie Downer, for being my constant champions, and Cy Coleman and Damon Booth, my brothers-in-love.
- My parents, Carol and Frank Downer; who are the center of my universe.
- My uncles, Bob and Harry, and my aunt, Jeri, for always cheering me on from the front row and for showing me the *light*.
- My nieces and nephews, Heidi and Gus Garcia, David Brown, junior, Lily Coleman and Wyatt Booth for giving me love and hope.
- Carmen Hasper, Karina Czoka and Joe Hasper will always have my appreciation for their support.

I acknowledge those members of my family whose importance to me transcends their deaths;

- My father, Earle Wallace Brown, who I am told gave me my *joie de vivre*, my speed and my spelling ability, my uncle, Stan Brown, my PoPo, Marion W. Brown, my Grandma Brown, Maybelle Anderson Brown

- My Grandma Nell (Chatham), my Grand Dad, Meade Chatham, my Grandpa Joe Willie Stell, Grandma Stell and my Aunt Leta, Aunt Dutch, and Uncle Frank.

My sincere gratitude goes to my each of my friends for their endless patience and constant loyalty. This acknowledgement can never make up of the time not spent together.

- Victoria Findlay for her indulgent love since the second grade.
- Nancy Nadel and Sele Nadel-Hayes for all the confidence they placed in this project and in me.
- Blackberri who helped me raise my children, my consciousness and my expectations of what friendship means.
- Sean Cloherty for a lifetime of gifts.
- Sohila Assadi for never giving up on me, even when I deserved it.
- Brian Tuthill for some good philosophical talk and provocative poetry.
- Ceil Gruessing, the Dancing Philosopher, for all of her choreography.
- Rebecca Wilder and Vicki Sarullo for constant love and support.
- I feel a heartfelt thanks to Hugo Daley for giving me work when I needed it and for excellent academic advice.
- Jose Alfresco, known as Joe Baby, grand master of the health center childcare program where he taught our babies post-revolutionary values.
- Clair Cade and Mika Cade for introducing me to eastern philosophy and for being my dear friends.

- Jane Franklin, Fred Sinder and Paulyne Holten-Sinder, Mariam Ehteshami, Heydar Fadae, Esmail Fadae, Susan Ehteshami, Sara Khosrowzadeh and Siamac Khosrowzadeh all patient and true friends.

- Mansoor Assadi for suggesting that I return to school and so much more.

- Special thanks for sharing your lives with Leila and me to Blythe Vaccaro, Vanessa Reed, Julia Boekelheide, Sally Jenkins-Stevens, Sarah Machen, Kaiya Shepard, Annie Johnson, Alana Perley, and Rhiannon O'Leary, Susanne Tennnant, Karl Ramsay, and Theo Hill.

- Thank you to Dale Redwood, a Rasta philosopher/printer for giving me work and constant encouragement. To Maria Rendon, I thank you for sharing your stories with me. I appreciate Chaklit Ali, Calixa Ali, Leila Ali and Qbah Odlum, all of whom have been a constant source of joy and inspiration to me.

- Some of my friends died prematurely but their memory is with me; Pat Parker, Debbie Fleming, Chappell Hayes and Evah Odlum each one gave so much and died too soon. I cherish my memory of Debbie Gregg, a dedicated health worker and revolutionary.

I am in indebted to the California Institute of Integral Studies for my graduate education. I will always be grateful to the team of gifted teachers who guided me;

- Sean Kelly, fearless leader of the *Hegel Seminar* (Spring 2000) and a member of my committee;
- David Ulansey whose lectures were models of scholarship, organization and inspiration;
- Brian Swimme and Charlene Spretnak for bringing Alfred North Whitehead to life for me;
- Rick Tarnas Stan Grof for the class, *Psyche and Cosmos;*
- Robert McDermott for the *Arobindo Lectures;*
- Doctor Yi Wu, for bridging the gap between Lao Tsu, Chuang Tsu, Confucius, Mencius, and me;

- Daniel Deslauriers for introducing me to the narrative method; and
- Mara Keller, the priestess who guided my class through the *Eleusinian Mysteries*.
- Nancy Hager, Christina Hardy, and all the staff of CIIS who guided me tenderly through the school bureaucracy.

Cindy Shearer was more to me than simply the chair of my dissertation committee. I am forever indebted to her for her sharp editorial comments, her consistently prompt responses, and her steady encouragement.

Many thanks go to my colleagues and friends.

- Kris Brandenburger, who did everything but plug in my computer to help me through this dissertation. All of her many contributions to the manuscript were improvements
- Barbara Seaman, the mother of the women's health movement who encouraged me to document the self-help experience.
- Noel Chang for transcendent technological support.
- Dianne Jenett for clearing a path for me to follow and for editorial support.
- Janine Canan, M.D., for helping me when I asked for it, no strings attached.
- Betty Meador's insights into the Jungian archetypes whose comments greatly improved this paper
- The staff at Moe's Bookstore in Berkeley, California for knowing better than I what books I needed.

I acknowledge all of the feminist health workers who were the heart and hands of the women's health movement.

- Lincy Comy, a self-help pioneer and longtime director of the Women's Choice Clinic in Oakland, for making the herstory of the clinic available to me.

- I am indebted to the women who shared their stories with me for their trust, their wisdom and for their support: Barbara Hoke, Carol Downer, Dido Hasper, Eileen Schnitger, Shauna Heckert, and Katrina Cantrell.

I wish I could acknowledge each of the women of the self-help movement who have meant something special to me. To name a few: Penny Burtch, Martha Whitiker, Francie Hornstein, Cindy Pearson, Kathy Hodge, Beverly Whipple, Lynn Randall, Lynn Thogerson, Lynn Walker, Nancy Walker, Jude Hanzo, Rebecca Chalker, Susan Clark, Chris Cleary, Cathy Courtney, Camilla Cracchiolo, Lynn Heidelberg, Eleanor Snow, Selina Espinoza, Ana Luisa Garcia-Ponce, Gail Goldstein, Thora De ley Claudine Serre, Diane Hale, Marilyn Skerbeck, Linda Curtis, Brenda Joyner, Coleen WilsonMarcia Kerwit, Judy Koretsky, Roberta Maso, Sandra Gomez, Ellen Peskin, Marian Banzhaf, Shelly Farber, Debi Law, Jennifer Bugess, Janet Callum, Beverly Whipple, Maureen Pierce, Teri Albright, Ginny Cassidy-Brinn, Nawal El Sadawa, Vicki Algarin, Lorraine Rothman, Suzann Gage, Fellina Nwadiki, Barbara Hansen, Edith Berg, Margo Miller, Naeko Wakabashi and Lolly and Jeannie Hirsch.

And

My special thanks go to Judy Grahn. Her ideas about menstruation are foundational to this work. Over the years the outer aspects of our relationship have changed many times but what has not changed is the place she holds in my heart. In 1972, the first thing Judy taught me was to operate a mimeograph machine and the second thing was how to get the ink off my hands when I made a mess in the process. Since then, Judy has been a fountain of knowledge and clean-up tips.

Permission to reprint from the following works is gratefully acknowledged:

The Proceedings of the Menstrual Extraction Conference. (1974) (Oakland Feminist Women's Health Center, Ed.).

Gimbutas, M. (1991). *The Language of the Goddess.* San Francisco: Harper Collins.

Bynum, C. W. (1988). *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Jung, C. G. (1983). *Bollingen Series XX. Vol. 13: Alchemical Studies* (R. F. C. Hull, Trans.). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Hornstein, F. (1974, Summer). An Interview on Women's Health Politics [Part2]. *Quest, 2,* 27-36.

Jenett, D. E. (1999). *Red Rice for Bhagavati/Cooking for Kannaki: An Ethnographic/Organic Inquiry of the Pongola Ritual At Attukal Temple, Kerala, South India.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, California Institute of Intergral Studies, Consciousness and Transformation. Photographs by Jean Weisinger.

Federation of Feminist Women's Health Centers. (1991). *A New View of a Woman's Body: A Fully Illustrated Guide* (10th ed.). West Hollywood: Feminist Health Press. Illustrations by Suzann Gage, R. N.

I greatly appreciate the original drawing by Julia Boekelheide from Plate 22 in *Language of the Goddess* by Marija Gimbutas of a pot c. 4200-3100 B. C.

Table of Contents

Abstract iv
Dedication Page vi
Acknowledgments vii
List of Images xvi

Part I - Preliminary Considerations

Editing Considerations 1

Definition of Menstrual Extraction 3

Preface - The Personal is Philosophical 14
First Bloods—Menarche 15
The Bloody Seventies--Coming of Age 20
Blood Alerts—
Our idea of security had serious flaws 22
Blood and Motherhood 23
Blood Payments 24
Blood Stains--Breaking the Taboo 26

Introduction - Why use stories about menstrual extraction to study how meaning is made? 29

Part II - Review of Selected Literature

Chapter One:
Survey of Past Menstrual Practices 45
Survey of Changes in Menstrual Practices 67
Menstrual Extraction - A New Menstrual Ritual 73

Chapter Two:
Brief Discussion of Ideas Used in this Exploration 83
Consciousness 84
Culture 93
Essentialism or Red Herring? 106
Evolution
and the Evolution of Consciousness 114
Meaning 125
Metaformic Theory 130
Metaphor 133
Myth 141
Patriarchy 143
Ritual 147
Sacred People, Sacred Things

and Sacred Places 157
Taboo and Pollution 159
Transformation 166

Part III - The Study

Chapter Three:
Methodology - Description of the Inquiry 169
The Narrative Method 171
The Paradigm of Complexity 175
The Qualitative Approach 178
An Epistemological Study 180
An Ontological Study 180
A Feminist Approach 185
The Deconstructionist Trend 188

Chapter Four:
Who are the Women? 191
Barbara Hoke 205
Carol Downer 207
Eileen Schnitger 214
Shauna Heckert 217
Dido Hasper 221
Katrina Cantrell 224

Chapter Five:
Description of the Research and Editing Process .. 229
The Preparation 230
The Interviews 230
The Transcription 232
The Analysis 232
The Editing Process 235

Part IV - Analysis and Interpretation of the Data

Chapter Six:
Through the Speculum:
Is Menstrual Extraction a Menstrual Ritual? . 240

Was Menstrual a Ritual? 244
Did Menstrual Extraction Repeat a
Mythical Example 247
Comparison Between Menarche Rites
and Self Help Practices 250
Cloth 252
Pot 255
Lamp 256

Sticks for separating 258
Mirror 259
Carried in procession 260
Kept off ground 261
Ritual Bathing 262
Seclusion 262
Considered Polluted 264
Divination Done 264
Feeding Sweets; Alcohol 266
Circling 267
Blood 268
Companions 270
Covering Hands 272
Hitting with sticks 272
Sitting with knees up 273
Ingests Something to Start Bleeding 274
Three Types of Transformation 275
The Women are Transformed 275
Language is Transformed 276
Transformation of Place 283

Chapter Seven:
Was Menstrual Extraction a Sign of the End of Patriarchal Consciousness and the Beginning of a New Phase of Collaborative Consciousness? 290
Linear Time is Destabilized 290
A Third Sex? 294
The Challenge of Globalization 295

Part V - Significance and Implications of the Inquiry

Chapter Eight:
Validation, Limitations, and the Potential Contribution of the Study 299
Limitations and Conclusions 304
Future Research is indicated 307
Potential Contributions of the Study ... 307

Appendices:
Informed Consent 309
List of Questions 311

Glossary of Self-Help Clinic Terms 312

Bibliography 316

List of Images

Illustration
The Del Em™ is the menstrual extraction kit designed by Lorraine Rothman. 3

Illustration
Drawing of a cervix seen through a speculum by a twentieth century artist 58

Illustration
A cervical image from the engraving on a mammoth tooth 60

Illustration
A seal c. 5500B.C.E. 61

Illustration
A pot with the spiral shape 61

Photograph
Christ bleeds out of his side into a chalice 63

Illustration
An alchemical image from Rhenanus, reprinted by C. G. Jung 65

Illustration
This is the Labyrinth 65

Illustration
The Wheel of Fortune 66

Illustration
A rock carving from 30,000 years B.C.E. 188

Illustration
Sketch of a building shaped like a uterus from around 4700 B.C.E. 189

Photograph
This is a photograph from the cervix's point-of-view 193

Illustration

This is the image of the *Participation Criteria* .. 197

Illustration
Menstrual extraction paraphernalia *251*

Photograph
This is an example of a Pongala pot
used for the annual ritual of cooking rice 255

Illustration
This is a drawing of the cervix as seen through the
reflection of the mirror 259

Editing Considerations

Two issues kept me off balance during the process of preparing this manuscript. One was capitalization and the other was tenses.

Capitalization

My first inclination was to take advantage of the opportunity of this dissertation to capitalize everything I thought was important and use small letters for everything else. This was a foolish notion based on an ill-placed sense of revenge for all the time I had to go along with everyone else's prejudices expressed as grammatical truths. When it came down to it, I found it was more important in this dissertation for me to use grammar to democratize ideas, not privilege some at the expense of others.

Aesthetics were a factor in my decision to minimize my use of capital letters. This dissertation is filled with discussion of important ideas. When I capitalized every important noun, the result was pages of distracting capital letters. I want to clarify that it is out of respect for the valuable ideas I am discussing that I do not liberally use capitals, not the opposite.

Tenses

My effort to standardize my use of verb tenses made me dizzy. The last thing I want to do is confuse readers, but

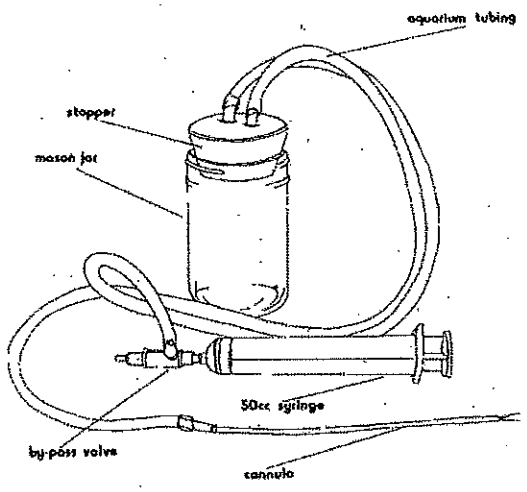
I want to be as exact as possible. Both the nature of this inquiry and the subject matter conspire against the easy application of rules for verb tenses. One thing that is confusing is that embedded in the discussion of rituals is time and timelessness. Tenses are designed to express linear time concepts, (*before*, *now*, and *after*), which do not easily serve to describe non-linear concepts of time well. Even more confusing is that I am talking about stories about a procedure that was mostly practiced in the past but continues to be practiced in the present on a minimal level. I use the past tense most often because my data is stories about experiences from the past even though some of the experiences are not really in the past in that they are on-going. I found no easy way to make these distinctions. Instead I opted for consistency with some exceptions.

I apologize in advance for any confusion these grammatical decisions cause a reader.

Definition of Menstrual Extraction

Menstrual extraction is a procedure done by women in self-help clinic groups for a woman on or about the first day of her menstrual period. Using a Del-Em™, a device created and patented by Lorraine Rothman, a 4mm flexible plastic tube, called a cannula, is inserted through the cervical canal into a woman's uterus. The cannula is attached to tubing that runs into a jar in which a vacuum has been created by removing the air through a second tube attached to a big syringe with a one-way valve (*The Proceedings of the Menstrual Extraction Conference*, 1974, p. 20).

Drawing by Karen Sjoholm



According to one of the books written by some of the women who practiced menstrual extraction,

> Menstrual extraction is an early accomplishment of the self-help movement. Lorraine Rothman invented the Del-

> Em™, a devise used by groups of women to suction out the uterine contents on or near to the time of the expected menstrual period. Women have used this technique, which shortens the menstrual period, lightens the flow, or terminates an early pregnancy, for ten years with outstanding safety and success. If this technology were widely available to women, the dark ages of state control of women's reproduction would be over. We would cease to worry about what the predominately male Supreme Court or legislature dictate (Cassidy-Brinn, Hornstein, Downer & Federation of Feminist Women's Health Centers, 1984, p. 16).

In 1971 the women of the self-help clinic groups coined the term, menstrual extraction, to distinguish it from a similar procedure, an abortion. The distinctions between abortion and menstrual extraction are as significant as the difference between rumpus room ping-pong and Wimbledon Tennis. Both are games played with a racket, a ball, and a net, but the differences in the setting, the equipment, and the experience and commitment of the players make amateur ping-pong a different experience than championship tennis. I do not mean to minimize the importance of menstrual extraction; I am only comparing the parallel relationships between the two sets of similar things.

A key distinction between abortion and menstrual extraction is that abortion is a service performed for a fee in a medical setting. The provider of the abortion

generally does not have any prior acquaintance with the client, and must obtain all information about her pregnancy and its duration through objective tests, such as blood or urine tests, a pelvic examination and nowadays an ultrasound. Women have false periods or may lie about when they had their last menstrual period, so the provider places total reliance on these tests. This information is vital, because the methods of abortion vary according to the length of the pregnancy. The provider has to be sure that the woman is qualified for the type of procedure available in that facility. If she is further along, she has to be referred to a provider with different equipment and more experience in later abortions.

Prior to the regular use of ultrasound, misgauging a pregnancy was a serious source of errors in performing abortions. Also, the provider has to assume that the client will not return for a check-up or report any complications; therefore it is essential to take every precaution to extract all of the contents of the uterus to prevent infection. Especially in the case of illegal abortions before the Supreme Court decision, a woman may have traveled from another town or even another country and will not be able to return for follow-up care.

Menstrual Extraction, unlike abortion, was not a service provided for a fee in a professional setting. Women met together regularly to talk about their bodies and about their lives, and performed regular cervical self-examination with one another. Usually the woman receiving the menstrual extraction was a member of the ongoing group, and they had personal knowledge of her menstrual cycle and her intimate relationships. But it was not unheard of for the woman to be a friend or sister of a member of the group; however, the group did have informal ways of getting the information about the woman's possible pregnancy and its duration. Additionally, they all performed the uterine-size check, enhancing the reliability of their objective information. Additionally, the group kept in close contact with the woman. If she developed any signs of having retained tissue, the most common complication, then the group could get together and perform another menstrual extraction. It was rare, but it has happened that a group would find themselves doing a menstrual extraction on a woman who was further along in the pregnancy than the group realized. This was not a big cause for concern if the woman had the ability to go to a provider to get an abortion. The provider would not even be aware that there had been an attempt to extract the

contents of the uterus. They would simply see a woman who was having a miscarriage. The woman would not be bleeding excessively or in any danger, unless she had waited for days or weeks to seek treatment. The real risk was legal and political. If the woman revealed that she had had a procedure, there could have been legal consequences for the group.

In an abortion, the patient is given anesthesia, either local or general. This is necessary because the provider uses enough suction and rapidly manipulates a cannula large enough to evacuate the uterus within two minutes, which causes pain. The patient is completely passive in this process.

In menstrual extraction, the woman who is having the extraction is the center of the process. She makes all the decisions and she even holds the Mason jar or the pumps the syringe to make the vacuum in the jar. If she is uncomfortable, the procedure is terminated. Since she is not under any kind of anesthesia or sedation, she can feel the entrance of the cannula and she can feel when the tip of it reaches the back wall of her uterus. She reports this feeling to the other women, who are inserting the cannula slowly and gently, and they are able to stop, thus lessening the possibility of damaging the uterus.

An abortion is much faster than a menstrual extraction. There are reasons why a menstrual extraction takes longer. First, the suction developed by pumping a small syringe makes less vacuum in the small jar than that used in an electrically-powered aspiration machine used in abortions. A typical menstrual extraction lasts as much as one-half an hour or even longer but an early abortion takes as little as two minutes. The group is not under any time pressure, as in an abortion facility, therefore they can go at whatever pace the woman desires.

The equipment used for an abortion is different from the equipment used for menstrual extraction. The cannula in an abortion is much larger in diameter than the 4 mm. The small cannula used in menstrual extraction can be easily inserted through the cervical canal, which is generally more open at the time of menstruation or in early pregnancy, without undue discomfort. No anesthetic is needed. In an abortion, the abortionist grasps the cervix with a tenaculum, a tong-like instrument, to hold it steady and to make it easier to force the larger tube through. In a menstrual extraction, it is usually sufficient to press the hand gently down on the abdomen to keep the uterus, which is a suspended or *floating* organ in place. Since a tenaculum usually causes small breaks in the cervical

mucous membrane, the cervical and vaginal walls are swabbed with antiseptic to reduce the likelihood of a local infection. This step is not necessary in a menstrual extraction.

Providers of abortion use very experienced medical staff. Due to the necessity of making an objective determination of a woman's pregnancy before the procedure and the inspection of the products of conception after the abortion, abortion providers have to be aware of all the variations in women's bodies and experiences. Due to the economic and practical necessity of having to perform large numbers of procedures in a short time, abortionists and their staffs have to be very practiced and skilled because they use more powerful and potentially dangerous equipment.

Women in a menstrual extraction group also need to be trained, but to a far lesser degree. Women learn about the range of *normal* by doing self-examination and extracting their periods on each other, and the equipment is designed to require minimal skill. For example, one woman can concentrate on keeping the cannula sterile while inserting it in the cervical canal, and then another woman can hook up the tubing. If she so desires, the woman receiving the menstrual extraction can pump the syringe. A

high degree of manual dexterity on anyone's part is not necessary.

All these differences are reflected in the aftercare instructions for an abortion versus those for menstrual extraction. After an abortion, a woman used to be prescribed antibiotics to protect from infection (this was before research showed that antibiotics covered up the presence of infection, delaying the best treatment, a re-aspiration), a cramping agent such as methergine to help her uterus return to its normal size, and she would be told to refrain from sex and tub baths to allow the opening to her uterus to close. After a menstrual extraction, these special follow-up precautions were not necessary because there was so little physical stress involved.

Abortion providers are careful to examine the evacuated material to be sure that they have not left tissue in the uterus, which can become the site of infection. Menstrual extraction groups also learned to distinguish menstrual periods from possible pregnancy tissue. It is clear from looking at the clear tube what type of material is passing through it. Menstrual blood comes down the cannula very slowly and is uniformly red, and when it comes into the jar, it has a gluey consistency. The products of conception, on the other hand, come down

more rapidly and are composed of clear liquid and whitish clumpy material. Women learned to recognize the products of conception and to evaluate whether or not they had extracted enough tissue. If they had any doubts, they would continue to aspirate until the uterus had contracted into a hard ball and the cannula would be very difficult to push in and out and sometimes a faint scraping of the sides of the uterus could be felt.

The feminist abortion clinics encouraged the woman's partner to accompany her through the experience, even in the procedure room, however, menstrual extraction was almost always conducted among women. Usually the menstrual extraction was performed on a woman who was not pregnant, or if she were, it was so early that she and her partner had not even started to relate to a possible pregnancy. Whether she told to tell her partner that she had a menstrual extraction that probably terminated a pregnancy was up to her, because she hadn't spent any money, she wasn't physically debilitated, and she received all the emotional support she needed from her friends in the group.

Significantly, a woman's feelings about obtaining an abortion are quite different from those when she experiences a menstrual extraction. For most women, finding out that they're pregnant when they don't want to

be is highly anxiety-producing. Even in these days when abortion providers are plentiful in the city, a woman still has to search out the provider, make an appointment and undergo the procedure, which has an irreducible amount of pain and perhaps anesthesia. Oftentimes, difficulties with her relationship to the man involved and shame intensify the discomfort and trauma. Generally, the women who participated in menstrual extraction did so as a part of a grass-roots research project. It was performed among friends in a non-judgmental, home atmosphere.

Women get abortions to end a pregnancy. Women used menstrual extraction to participate in woman-controlled research, to shorten a menstrual period (for example for hiking, or scuba diving), or as training to do early abortion. The health center books say that,

> Menstrual extraction should not be viewed as an attempt to avoid menstruation or short-circuit natural functions. It is a means for a woman to exert influence over changes in her body, which she could not control before, in order to eliminate occasional discomfort or inconvenience or an unwanted pregnancy (Federation of Feminist Women's Health Centers, 1991, p. 122).

In sum, abortions are what an expert does for somebody else as a medical service for a fee to end a pregnancy.

Menstrual extraction is what women do with each other under certain strict conditions for a variety of reasons.

Learning to do menstrual extraction and spreading the technology to women in North America and Europe enabled women in the early 70's to become influential in the type of abortion care delivered after the Supreme Court decision in 1973 and to become leaders in the abortion care profession. The same women who practiced menstrual extraction were abortion activists who learned to do abortions and who later ran abortion clinics. The knowledge they gained enabled them to promote non-traumatic aspiration abortions and many other improvements in the technology of abortion. For years, these feminists who ran abortion clinics had permanent seats on the board of the National Abortion Federation, and presented seminars on abortion in cooperation with medical professionals for other medical professionals.

It [menstruation] represents the essence of femininity.
Simone de Beauvoir
(de Beauvoir 1974, 168)

The Personal is Philosophical

I tell the following personal life details, some of which are graphic, because they are the stories that informed the research and the results of this study. In this investigation I am drawing together a handful of seemingly unrelated pieces--each part apparently independent from the others--but connected through my experience. My experiences with menstrual extraction and the self-help clinic have enabled me to speak about menstrual experiences with greater ease. I hope that the reader will have a similar evolution.

My evolving menstrual story is the framework of this dissertation. This exploration, like my menstrual story, crosses many boundaries. Like my menstrual story, this inquiry has its own logic based on my expanding understanding of my menstrual experiences. It expresses the progress (and lack of progress) I have made in making meaning of my menstrual life.

The connections that I make in this dissertation between my menstrual story and how meaning is made are like all of my menstrual experiences in that they are not neat

or tidy. No one pattern is the prototype for the rest, but through the examination of several threads of details I hope to weave together the beginning of a new menstrual myth. Rather than looking for a preprinted pattern of how meanings are made, I am trying to re-imagine new patterns for potential new meanings. I do this for the purpose of inviting new insights into old material.

The rest of this preface is a collection of some of my menstrual stories. I understand that they are particular to me, but they have many universal aspects. The stories are full of content but sometimes they lack an obvious structural coherence. In this dissertation my menstrual stories are explored in order to show meanings that may have been hidden or obscured to expose the underlying coherence.

First Bloods--Menarche

I am the oldest of six siblings. We all grew up in Los Angeles with our parents. Our grandparents and great-grandparents lived nearby and we saw them often. Nestled within the matrix of my family, I always knew I had a clan that I could always depend on and one that I would have to account to.

My first menstrual period started during the sweltering heat of the summer of the Watts riots in south

central Los Angeles. I lived with my family across town in the northeast area, Highland Park. I was trapped in the house on a weekend with my whole family. My brother and sisters, my dad and pregnant mom were in the living room watching television-- on a weekend afternoon. The whole set-up was off. The last place I wanted to be was there. It was so hot and sticky. The cramps were so scary. There was nowhere to go. Upstairs was too hot. Outside was too hot. My parents were not TV oriented but the riots were happening right then. My dad's mother lived near the rioting so nerves were frayed.

My mom got me going with a belt and a pad. That was when it started to go terribly wrong. The blood, the cramps--I was up to that-- but the bulky pad and the hideous elastic belt with metal attachments dangling ominously in front and back were more than I could take. Could this really be happening to me? My mother handled the pad and the belt casually. She was definitely resigned to this thing. My blood ran cold. It was so hot and muggy. I was soggy all over. I felt like I was sweating blood. The smell of the blood made my stomach flip over and my nose recoil. It got worse.

It did not take long to fill up the first pad while I watched the riots. Then, alone in the bathroom, I was

confronted with the irrefutable evidence that my body had run amok. Eventually, I became more adept at handling the menstrual supplies and it turned out that my first menstruation was not indicative of the type of menstruations to come, but I did not know it then. Then I was clumsy, messy, and smelly. The most important project for me that day was wrapping the pad in toilet paper until it was white, white, white, thereby hiding the evidence. Los Angeles lived with its bloody legacy; I lived with mine. This was my first inkling of the joining of my course with the course of history.

Later that year I had a different blood story, a *girl fight* in junior high school. I had a confrontation with other kids who forced me to fight if I wanted to walk home from school. In order to get me away from that rough school, my parents stretched their resources to move the whole family to a more middle class neighborhood that became the backdrop of my high school rebellion.

By the time I got to high school, the world was coming apart. Teachers were on strike. Our leaders were getting killed. The establishment was under siege because of an unjust war. The farm workers organized a boycott of grapes to expose shameful working conditions and the routine use of dangerous insecticides by corporate farmers.

As soon as I had heterosexual sex (when I was seventeen years old) I experienced a variety of unpleasant vaginal infections and I got pregnant immediately. It turned out that the vaginal infections, which should have been simple to solve, became traumatic because of the insensitivity of the judgmental male doctor who saw me, but the pregnancy that might have been really traumatic turned out to be not bad because my mother took me to an underground clinic and got me an abortion in a supportive and kind atmosphere.

The place my mom took me to get my first abortion was a non-doctor clinic where my mom and her friends were observing abortions. It was located in a regular medical building on the West Side of Los Angeles. It wasn't dirty but it was makeshift. One of the makeshift aspects was that instead of doing anything special with the *products of conception* (which is basically everything that is aspirated in an abortion procedure) the bloody stuff was unceremoniously dumped into the toilet and flushed away. They used a big metal tray to hold the products of conception from more than one case. Somehow it became my job to dump the full metal tray. I was not working there, but it seemed normal for me to help in those informal circumstances.

As I carried the tray down the hallway to the bathroom, the clotty stuff sloshed around in the blood. I thought I could get it down the hall and into the toilet if I was careful. All the way down the hall, the sloshing, bloody wave stayed in the tray. I thought I had caught its rhythm so I hurried a little faster. Then, just before what should have been the slosh before the final slosh into the bowl, the wave flew out of the tray and all over me. Even my head and my hair were covered in blood clots. The whole thing was distasteful. For a minute I thought I might perish from the horror of it. I froze.

I did not perish. I did not even throw-up or faint. I washed myself off as best as I could and joined the others. Spilling the blood was disturbing to me but it also had the effect of taking my mind off my own cramps and my own situation. I was much too proud to admit to my mother or to her friends, or even to my boyfriend what had happened in the bathroom. It was something between the blood and me; it was my first blood secret.

Around this time, in the spring of 1971, I tagged along with my mom to a women's liberation meeting at Everywoman's Bookstore. In the back of the store they had an office/meeting room. The subject of the meeting was women learning collectively how to provide their own

abortions, which were still illegal at the time. As part of the training, my mom, Carol Downer, took off her pants and showed everyone her cervix by putting a speculum in her vagina. Everyone was excited and impressed with this. I was too. Over the next couple of years the group evolved from there to become the self-help clinic group. The group established health centers with clinics and health education programs. One development of the self-help group was menstrual extraction as described earlier.

In the self-help clinic model, the emphasis is on the validity of each woman's experience. One side effect of this was that the women in the group did not hold my young age against me. My experience was valued and respected. I was politically active in other organizations at this time.

The Bloody Seventies--Coming of Age

In the fall of 1972, I returned to the University of California at Berkeley for my sophomore year. I was full of revolutionary zeal. Instead of attending sophomore classes, I founded the Oakland Feminist Women's Health Center. I was nineteen years old. I had already been doing menstrual extraction for about one year with a self-help group in Berkeley. The Women's Liberation Movement, the Civil Rights Movement and the anti-colonial struggles were gathering momentum.

My relationship to menstrual extraction spanned my sexual relationships from lesbian to straight. When I was having sex with men, I used menstrual extraction for birth control. When I was having sex with women, I used menstrual extraction for research or training purposes. Some women used menstrual extraction to have shorter periods but I did not do it because it was a convenience. Menstrual extraction is not painless and I was not that concerned about cutting my flow short. When we first started doing menstrual extractions among ourselves, we were curious, even concerned, that perhaps our menstrual cycle would be affected, or perhaps our menstrual periods would change somehow. These concerns lessened as we never noticed any change whatsoever in our cycles or in the characteristics of our menstrual periods. We avidly read the medical journal articles regarding birth control methods, and we learned that comparative studies showed that regular use of the birth control pill or IUD carried more dangers than not using any birth control even with early, legal abortion or menstrual extraction as a back-up.

The benefits of menstrual extraction were plentiful but they were not free. Menstrual extraction was always risky, personally and politically. The fear of doing something wrong or getting caught was real. It made us

medically conservative. One of our rules was that we did not hurt each other; pain was a definite contraindication to menstrual extraction which could cause cramping. But cramps did not really impress us as pain that counted. No one ever said anything, but if the cramps were not worse than the worst menstrual cramps of the same person, then they did not count as *pain*. I adopted a grin-and-bear-it attitude towards the cramps. We kept the pain within the group.

Blood Alerts--
Our idea of security had serious flaws

We kept our fear in the group too. Our public attitude was that menstrual extraction was an extralegal procedure and therefore not that risky. Inside the group, we practiced our version of security measures. We decentralized the parts of the equipment and supplies that we used; one woman brought the Del-Em™, another brought the sterilizing solution and someone else brought the speculums. We did not park our cars together when we descended on a woman's house so we would not attract attention. We were not operating on a commercial scale so elaborate precautions were possible each time. We were careful.

Once in the middle of an extraction, someone banged very loudly on the front door. It was a neighbor holding the daughter of one of the group members by the scruff of her neck. The eight-year-old had been playing at doing *abortions* for the whole neighborhood. There was no use telling the neighbor or the children that this was *menstrual extraction*, not abortion. Luckily, the neighbor accepted some sort of explanation and an apology. The matter went no further. We finished the menstrual extraction.

Blood and Motherhood

I was in a menstrual extraction group when I adopted my older daughter, Cassidy. Having had the experience of learning to be aware of my menstruation and my ovulation in my self-help groups, I noticed that Cassidy was tuned into my cycle since infancy. Cassidy always knew when I had menstrual events of any kind. She also was aware of my pregnancies before I was. Self-help could not help me explain this, but it did teach me to notice and respect the female experience in all its aspects, including what I would later understand as a blood connection. To me our blood connection was a blood mystery.

The Oakland Feminist Women's Health Center and I grew together for almost twenty years. The health center had

some special benefits. One was total access to reproductive health care. It was possible for me to work until early afternoon, run downstairs to the clinic, slip off my clothes, put my feet in the stirrups, receive health treatment from the clinic staff and get back to my desk without missing a beat. Collectivized childcare was another special benefit. I raised my daughters, not as a *single* woman, but as an unmarried woman with personal and institutional support.

In 1982, my daughter Leila was born. My menstrual periods adjusted for the pregnancy and never went back to the old pattern. Even today, when we live together, my daughters and I get our periods at the same time. We keep track of our cycles.

Blood Payments

All of my menstrual extractions and abortions went without any medical complications except one. Our experience in performing menstrual extraction always went smoothly because if a woman experienced undue discomfort, she generally stopped the procedure. If she thought she was pregnant, she might endure more discomfort rather than have a medical abortion (legal or illegal). All of my menstrual extractions were positive experiences without noticeable physical side effects. Also, the fact that we used such a

small sized cannula (4mm-5mm) meant that we did not do any extra dilation of the opening to the uterus. In turn, this meant that we did not need anesthetic that meant we did not need to give a shot. Also, we did not need to use any special instruments to stabilize the uterus. Because we did not break the skin, we could safely use a simple antiseptic. Menstrual extraction was as physically non-traumatic as we could make it.

I did have one sad experience with an abortion. This was a legal abortion given to me by a doctor that I received at a medical clinic. I had wanted to have the baby, but because the pregnancy was tied up with a heartbreaking affair, I reluctantly had the abortion. I was so sad about the abortion that when I began to have the symptoms of the easy-to-remedy *complication* of a bit of retained tissue I did nothing. I knew that it was a simple thing to reaspirate the tissue at the clinic, but I was so sad about the abortion that I thought I deserved the bleeding and the cramps. So, the not-unusual and easy-to-correct problem of a little retained tissue resulted in months of bleeding and clotting. My sister called this my *six-months abortion*, an exaggerated but apt description.

It was finally over in a motel room in Carmel, California. I passed a clot as big as my hand, like a big

piece of liver. The blood poured out of me and splashed all over the tile. This time the blood message was not as benign as before.

Blood Stains--

Breaking the Taboo

The last menstrual story happened about ten years after my first abortion. This was the day that I learned that the taboos about showing menstrual blood in public came from inside of me as well as from outside influences. I was wearing my favorite white dress on a commuter flight from Los Angeles to Oakland. I was seated in a window seat near the middle of the plane. Then, several things happened at once. The plane had already landed safely on the Oakland runway when it stopped. The seat belt sign and a stewardess kept me in my seat. I felt the blood start just about the time the plane jerked to a stop. Finally the plane taxied to the gate. By the time I got up and looked at the back of my dress, I saw that I was now wearing a red and white dress. I was the last one off the plane. I was thunderstruck. I could not believe my eyes. There were big, unmistakable splotches of blood on the skirt of my dress. The ground seemed to be unstable under my feet. The busy airport was an out-of-focus blur. The varied sounds became one roaring sound in my ears.

Of course the gate was the farthest one from the entrance. Of course the airport was crowded. Some people stared and pointed as I passed by. Others discreetly tried to give me the eye. There was nothing to do but keep going. Step by step I walked away from embarrassment and awkwardness. By the time I made it through the terminal and across the street, (just before I finally got to the far side of the parking lot), details of my surroundings came back into focus, the roar of sounds turned to a car horn, a seagull's cry and a policeman's whistle. The colors separated and the shapes turned into blue sky, yellow taxi and green hills. By the time I got to my car, my focus had changed permanently. I had put the red spots on the skirt of my dress into a new perspective. I received a new blood message. The power of the blood became my power over the blood.

Then, over the years, my participation in the women's liberation movement became a fond memory. Menstrual extraction and self-cervical exam faded into the background. I returned to school to study philosophy, cosmology, and consciousness. During my life as an activist, I put many philosophical issues on the back burner in favor of immediate action. Graduate school was a chance for me to focus on the consideration of

philosophical questions. I was ready for something more spiritually satisfying. Philosophy, cosmology, and consciousness seemed far removed from the asphalt of street demonstrations or the disinfectant smell of medical clinics. I was ready for *intellectual* pursuits.

During the course of my studies I was moved by the discovery that so many cosmological roads lead-- not to Rome but to menstrual blood.

Today, a menstrual subject is again the centerpiece of my attention, this time for my dissertation.

At the time I was doing menstrual extraction I did not think it was a ritual. Just the opposite. I felt that what we were doing was new, not old. I thought it was something original and unique. My dissertation is composed of an exploration of how I came to study menstrual extraction as a manifestation of something very old and fundamental, the study itself and a few concluding remarks. This dissertation is the part of my personal blood myth that is a philosophical inquiry into how meaning is made.

The essence of life is to be found in the frustrations of the established order. The Universe refuses the deadening influence of complete conformity.
Alfred North Whitehead

(Whitehead 1968, 88-87)

Introduction

Why use stories about menstrual extraction to study how meaning is made?

Meaning, making meaning and changing meaning are the subjects of this study. I explore the stories of menstrual extraction for evidence of the meaning-making process, for signs of expressions of meaning, and for evidence of changing meanings. This is an inquiry into the meaning of the stories of menstrual extraction. The stories and the process of studying and retelling the stories are both the object of my attention. The data reveals layers of (sometimes contradictory) meanings. I attend to the conscious meaning as revealed in the stories. Further, I address the possible meaning of menstrual extraction when it is explored as a ritual (albeit an unconscious one). I speculate on the possible meaning of the retelling of the menstrual extraction stories as examples of myth making.

The political and medical significance of menstrual extraction has been studied but the philosophical implications of menstrual extraction are yet to be

investigated. My goal for this dissertation is to clarify the meaning of menstrual extraction in terms first articulated by Simone de Beauvoir, who saw the menses as defining the *essence* of femininity. If de Beauvoir is correct, if the western woman is defined by her menstrual practice that is informed by her shame of menstruation, what does it mean that women in self-help groups developed a technology and a practice that subverted this definition?

The shame of menstruation is held in place by cultural taboos that say that menstruation must be hidden from view. Taboos are enforced through rituals of daily life. The taboo is that menstruation *is* shameful; the ritual is the action that shows that menstruation is shameful. Menstrual rituals are the rules and restrictions that regulate menstrual practices. Menstrual rituals are the rules of how to treat menstruation. The rules of menstruation, the taboos about menstruation and the rituals of menstruation vary widely among cultures. Rules, taboos, and rituals are all ways that cultures make meaning of menstruation and express the *truths* of menstruation for that culture. Rules, taboos and rituals hold the meaning of menstruation in place.

A trend in religious studies says that rituals precede myths (Eliade, 1971; Lincoln, 1981; Grahn, 1994; Lakoff &

Johnson, 1999). There is a growing body of scholarly work that shows that rituals (especially female initiation rituals)--utilizing taboos and rules as mechanisms of enforcement-- are meaning-making procedures (Knight 1991; Grahn 1993; Lamp 1988; Turner 1969).

According to this way of thinking, the meaning of a ritual resides in the myths that are told about it. Rituals can be the same between one culture and another (and often are), but when the myths that are told about the rituals are different, the meaning is different. I use the example of a parade to show this point. The action of carrying a person or persons ceremoniously, accompanied by others through the streets while on-lookers watch, is a parade. The American New Year's Day celebration begins with the Rose Parade. For Americans this is not a religious ceremony. The Rose Parade is a secular event. This is the American truth.

The same action--carrying a person or persons ceremoniously, accompanied by others through the streets while on-lookers watch--describes a tradition that can be traced to the origins of human religious practices. Keeping the special (often royal) person off the ground avoids the contamination that would happen if the body or the blood of a royal person should touch the ground (Frazer, 1963, p.

696). If the royal blood does touch the ground, the ground becomes hallowed ground, sacred ground, and can no longer be used by regular people. The ground becomes taboo to touch. For the ancients who carried the princess in a litter through a crowd of on-lookers, this was a religious act. The meaning of the parade was to actualize the cultural taboo by keeping the princess off the ground. In this way people were made safe and secure; the rules were being followed, all was well, that was their truth.

The princess who rides a float in the Rose Parade is repeating the action of ancient people but her ride carries a different meaning. The actions are the same, the meaning changes. The meanings change because the stories that explain the rituals change.

Ritual plays the role of holding myths in place (Eliade, 1971; Grahn, 1994). The Catholic Church uses elaborate rituals to hold Christian myths in place. When the Holy Communion wafer melts in the mouths of Catholics, they taste the myth of the body and blood of Christ. The connection between the wafer and the body of Christ is expressed in the myth (*The New Jerusalem Bible*, 1990). The myth explains the ritual.

Myths hold the boundaries of consciousness in place by explaining where the boundaries are through stories. Human

consciousness is consciousness of the meaning of myths. In the myth of scientific materialism, material boundaries mark where reality begins and ends and where relevance begins and ends. A person with a scientific consciousness may not even consider non-material reality because it is irrelevant, according to the myth. The materialist myth is that matter is the only significant aspect of the universe. Matter is the beginning and ending of meaning.

During rituals, things that are mundane are transformed into things that are special (sacred). Clothing, jewelry, even plain water is made sacred through ritual practices. Rituals transform places. Sacred ground is found today in churches or embassies on foreign soil. Rituals transform people into queens, into wives, and into business partners, just to name a few examples. The difference between a queen and a cleaning lady are the daily rituals that each performs. Each day, the shoes they wear, the beds they sleep on, the clothes they wear, and the way they fix their hair, are ways the queen and the cleaning lady are set apart from each other. Places are made sacred through the application of rituals; the incantations of a priest over a burial site or the flying of a flag over a building transform a mundane place to a sacred place, with special rules and special meanings.

Many theories about consciousness focus on the role played by metaphor in the structure of human consciousness (Jaynes, 1990; Ricoeur, 1977; Gebser, 1985; Lakoff & Turner, 1980; Lakoff & Johnson, 1999; Lakoff, 1990; Sweester, 1990). Metaphors mediate between two unlike things in a way that is similar to how ritual mediates between unalike things. Metaphors explain relationships. Rituals act out relationships. Myths attribute meaning to metaphors and rituals.

It is not uncommon to find menstrual metaphors posited as the primary metaphors used for structuring human consciousness (Jayakar, 1990; Grahn, 1994; Turner, 1987; Knight, 1991; Hays, 1964; Douglas, 1982; Neumann, 1971; Owen, 1993; Eliade, 1977). Menstruation and menstrual rituals (female initiation rituals) are often related to consciousness because all three, menstruation, menstrual rituals, and consciousness are closely related to ritual, metaphor, and to origin stories.

Numerous cultural origin stories outside of the western canon link menstruation causally to the beginning of human time (Delaney, Lupton and Toth 1988) (Jayakar 1990) (Laws 1990) (Durkheim 1897: 50) and more recently, to the beginnings of religious thought (Douglas 1966: 6) (Buckley 1988:3). People from widely varying places and

cultures take it for granted that menstrual metaphors explain consciousness. Evidence of this is found in origin stories. Typically stories about origins or beginnings are stories about the consciousness of the storyteller.

The ritual of hiding menstruation in western culture is so successful that little evidence remains on the surface to document the power of menstruation; its power is obscured in many ways, however, one way this occurs is by separating the definition of blood from that of menstruation. In western culture, the power of the blood, that was originally menstrual blood, stayed with the word blood but did not stay with menstruation. Under the entry for *blood* in the Oxford English Dictionary there is no reference to menstruation. The rituals of western culture respect the blood of Christ, the blood of brothers, the blood spilled in war and lots of other blood, but the *blood* of menstruation has had little official status as blood in language or in practice. One effect of the changing menstrual rituals of the recent past is that menstruation is associated with blood in everyday language (Grahn 1993, xviii). "She is bleeding" is a typical way to describe a menstruating woman in today's world.

This makes it understandable why westerners have a difficult time interpreting non-western stories about

blood. To the majority of non-western storytellers or listeners, *blood* is a sacred substance that flows from many sources, including the uterus. For many non-western people the connection between consciousness and menstrual blood is *common sense* because it is truth that is contained in stories and expressed in rituals.

Here are some examples of origin stories (stories about the coming to consciousness) which include direct (and symbolic) reference to menstrual blood. In an aboriginal Australian origin story, the deity, Rainbow Snake, swallows two sisters, one who is giving birth, the other who starts her first menstruation (Knight 1991, 248-50). South American Indians said humanity was crafted out of menstruation called, *moon blood*. The same idea prevailed in ancient Mesopotamia, where the Great Goddess Ninhursag crafted humanity out of clay and infused it with her blood of Life (Walker 1996, 635). In the Koran, Allah made man out of clots of blood (SURA XCVI). The founding Chinese father, the Yellow Emperor, absorbed the red *yin juice* of twelve hundred women (Walker 1996, 638).

Janice Delaney et al, authors of *The Curse: A Cultural History of Menstruation*, say,

> It is impossible to escape the conclusion that menstrual politics has dominated social and economic relations between the sexes since the beginning of time (Delaney, Lupton and Toth 1988, 62).

This is the study of the stories of women who practiced menstrual extraction. I studied these stories as an investigation of meaning and how it is made. My approach was to determine if menstrual extraction could be considered to be a ritual.

The relationship between rituals and meaning, between human consciousness and transformation is up for debate. From the scientific perspective, ritual is not a constitutive factor in consciousness; ritual is a product of consciousness.

Experientialist approaches and transpersonal approaches, consider rituals to be central to the evolution of consciousness. Experientialists emphasize the body's relationship to the environment and to the mind. For them, rituals give structure and significance to human activities by minimizing chaos and disparity. Rituals parallel some aspect of reality as it is defined through the cultural myths (Lakoff & Johnson 1980; 233-234). The experientialist

approach favors understanding the embodied and relational aspects of ritual.

There is no one transpersonal attitude toward ritual, but in general the transpersonal paradigms are concerned with the structures of consciousness, so for them, rituals are often imagined as expressions of unconscious forces (such as archetypes, libido or assorted energies).

Instead of concentrating all the meaning of consciousness in the chemistry of the physical body, these other lines of inquiry push the boundaries of what is meaningful beyond the physical brain.

In this study I ask, *What is the meaning of menstrual extraction*. What meaning was created through its practice?

If rituals are transformative, then what, who, or where was transformed by menstrual extraction?

If *menstrual extraction is a ritual, what is the myth that expresses its consciousness*?

I give cross-cultural examples of menstrual rules, taboos, and rituals, including western rules, taboos, and rituals. Menstrual extraction is one of many examples of (menstrual) taboo-breaking behavior that occurred in the second half of the twentieth century in the western world. It is one of the few taboo-breaking examples that involves the *blood* itself. Artistic expressions of the menstrual

taboo-breaking behavior used images of blood, and openness about menstruation was reflected in words about menstruation, but menstrual extraction involved real menstrual blood.

It was many years after I had stored my menstrual extraction kit among my sewing supplies that I became intrigued by the possibility that menstrual extraction might hold hidden meanings. My interest in studying menstrual extraction as a philosophical subject began in the context of my studies at the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS). My attention was drawn back to menstrual extraction many times over the course of my studies. Menstrual extraction had been a practical response to the material problem of restrictive abortion laws. Menstrual extraction was used for birth control, for research, and as a convenience. It was not a theoretical project; it was a political project, or so I had imagined.

My inquiry does not directly concern menstrual extraction as a political project, although it does touch on the topic. My study explores what happens when menstrual extraction is considered to be a ritual. This view does not supplant the view of menstrual extraction in its many other aspects; it merely adds a dimension. Until now, menstrual extraction has been studied as a political response to

paternalistic abortion laws, a medical solution for unwanted pregnancy, and as a form of feminist research. The relationship between menstrual extraction and meaning becomes more credible when menstrual extraction is understood in its aspect as a ritual, rather than when it is defined as a political statement, a medical procedure, or a personal choice.

For many cultures, menstrual stories are important because they carry cultural content across cultural boundaries and across time (Delaney, Lupton & Toth, 1988; Mead, 1967; Neumann, 1971; Douglas, 1982, p. Grahn 1993; Knight, 1991). A story can travel with a wife who marries into a foreign group. A story can span generations and tie them together as one or it can work in the opposite way and disrupt relationships.

Community menstrual rituals are often the central theme of non-Christian religions. When they are not the central theme, menstrual rituals often play key social and cultural roles across a multitude of cultures. It is commonplace for cultures to feature menstrual rituals (and menstruation) in their foundational myths. Every culture has a foundational myth and many of them feature menstrual rituals (Hays, 1964; Delaney, Lupton & Toth, 1988).

The first part of this dissertation is my attempt to imagine that menstrual extraction is a ritual in the primordial tradition of menstrual rituals. I use this as a method of exploring the potential meaning of menstrual extraction.

To do this, I present an overview of menstrual practices so as to fit menstrual extraction into the context of changing menstrual practices.

Once I have shown the wide variety of menstrual practices and how menstrual extraction might fit in with them, my next step is to explore the role that rituals play in making meaning. Not all scholars agree that rituals play a significant role in culture but many think that understanding rituals is important. Three reasons for studying menstrual extraction a ritual are:

1. Rituals enact meaning
2. Rituals express consciousness
3. Rituals are transformative

If menstrual extraction can be understood to be a ritual, then, it is possible to apply ideas about rituals in general to menstrual extraction.

This is an investigation into meaning. Meaning is the knowledge that humans use to make sense of the world. I address the question of how knowledge is made and where

knowledge originates. I address this topic through an investigation of the stories about a contemporary menstrual practice. I open (in the Preface) with some personal stories in a personal voice that bear on the inquiry. My personal stories are included as part of the investigation because they are part of the process that holds this research together. If I had not personally participated in menstrual extraction, or if I had not heard of menstruation as sacred bleeding, or if I had not studied philosophy, cosmology, and consciousness, this inquiry would not have come together.

All of that did happen, and this is the result.

In this section, I introduce the idea that menstrual extraction might be treated as a ritual for the purpose of exploring the meaning it might contain.

In the first chapter, I show that in the second half of the twentieth century a significant change occurred in menstrual practices and in the meaning of menstruation in Europe and North America. One point of this chapter is to show that menstrual extraction can be understood in the context of changing menstrual practices.

The second chapter is a description of the design of the study. I present my application of the narrative method and I discuss qualitative research in general.

In Chapter Three, I briefly review some of the thinking that brought my attention to the possibility that menstrual extraction might profitably be examined as a ritual. I discuss how each of the topics relates to meaning. The topics covered are: consciousness, culture, essentialism, evolution, meaning, metaformic theory, metaphor, myth, patriarchy, pollution, ritual, sacred people, sacred objects, sacred places, taboo, and transformation.

In the next chapter I introduce the women I interviewed to learn how they became involved in menstrual extraction, what menstrual extraction meant to them and in what ways menstrual extraction had an impact on their lives. I include some biographical details to give the information context.

Chapter Five is a description of the process of collecting the interviews.

In Chapter Six, I explore the following questions: Can menstrual extraction be considered to be a ritual? If so, what was transformed?

In Chapter Seven I consider what the findings and the analyses of might imply about the meaning of menstrual extraction and how it might be a foundational ritual of a new society.

Chapter Eight concludes the study with an evaluation of the method and suggestions for the direction of future research.

Oh! Menstruating woman, thou'st a fiend
From whom all nature should be screened!
An English Poet

(de Beauvoir 1974, 35)

Chapter One

Survey of Past Menstrual Practices

In this chapter, I situate menstrual extraction in the midst of a trend in western culture (that occurred in second half of the twentieth century) toward bringing menstruation into the open. It was as if the taboos that directed that menstruation be hidden and that defined western cultural menstrual practices from the nascent moments of western civilization in Classical Athens began to shift quickly in a new direction. Menstrual practices in western culture changed from practices meant to hide menstruation to practices that intended to bring menstrual blood more into the open. One point of this chapter is to show that menstrual extraction can be understood in the context of changing menstrual practices. A second point is that the change in menstrual practices that I am describing has already occurred and we are looking back on the change.

In western civilization, until the breakthrough period of the late twentieth century, the menstrual experience was treated as a dirty secret that was not spoken of in polite company (*Woman in Sexist Society: Studies in Power and*

Powerlessness, 1971, 469). Unlike cultures in which menstruating girls are hidden in secluded huts (Mead 1967: 169), or tied up and hung over smoldering fire (Frazer 1963: 163), or required to sit alone and immobile for periods of time (Lincoln 1981), in western culture it is not the menstruating females that are hidden, it is menstruation itself and all menstrual practices and all implements of menstruation that are hidden (Laws 1990, 42).

Nothing about menstruation was sacred in traditional western civilization. Menstrual blood had the status of toxic waste. Hallmark does not make greeting cards with a menstrual message. Menstruation is what proves that some people are females; menstruation is the message. Menstruation is a hygiene problem that can be solved with sprays, douches, pads, belts, glue, applicators (plastic or paper) or tampons (tubular or umbrella versions). It is blue on television. Menstruation is the Rubicon each girl crosses into permanent womanhood.

According to traditional western mythology, menstruation is most significant in its absence. Menstruation is loss. Menstruation is evidence of fertility wasted. Menstruation is a good reason to have sex. According to western cultural practices, menstruation is a good reason not to have sex or menstruation can be messy

and painful. Menstruation is an embarrassment for girls and boys and many men and women. For girls, menstruation is the bloody proof that Nature is dark and disgusting and a good thing for them to cry about. For boys, it's something to overcome. According to western medical science, menstruation is the waste product of the female reproductive system. Menstruation is the negation of pregnancy without any ontological status of its own.

Then, with relatively little foreshadowing, beginning in the nineteen-seventies, the rules radically changed. Menstrual taboos were flagrantly and publicly broken. Twenty years after de Beauvoir first published *The Second Sex*, (1949), in which she told a philosophical menstrual story that explains how, in western society, women are created from females with the vital aid of menstrual taboos that the taboos she described were publicly ignored. When she told this story, de Beauvoir broke the taboo of shame and silence towards menstruation in the western canon. This started a trend that gained momentum within popular culture in the nineteen sixties and early nineteen seventies. Until then, the record of menstrual experiences in western civilization, when it exists at all, is mostly second-hand and incidental. Like menstruation itself, in the history of

western civilization, menstruation is most significant in its absence.

In pre-Greek cultures, menstruation was typically at the center of the social order and the blood itself considered the most pure, the most powerful material of all. The Greeks used the word *noumenon* for the New Moon (menstrual) festivals (Shuttle and Redgrove 1988, 130). Most non-English words for menstruation also meant *supernatural, sacred, spirit,* or *deity.* In old Arabic the word for *pure, is menstruation* and *impure* is now *menstruation* in contemporary Arabic (Walker 1996, 635). Both in Arabic and in Latin where the word *sacer* has been translated as *pure* and *impure* the known origin of the word is *menstruation* and only *menstruation* (Walker 1996, 635). Perhaps the only thing that matches the reverence and awe for menstruation of so many cultures, from the far-distant past to the present, is the irreverence and disgust shown for menstruation in the western world.

Plato makes no mention of menstruation. Aristotle documents the Greek phallo-centric disdain for menstruation as the evidence that females are impure and incomplete (as opposed to males who are complete) (Aristotle 1995,728b22-24, 728a16-21). Disdain for menstruation was one way in which Plato and Aristotle distinguished themselves from the

traditions they inherited which were in awe of the power of menstrual blood (Meador 1986). A different example of the same trend of favoring the phallus at the expense of the vagina is seen in Classical Greece where the most popular image of Classical Athens was the image of an erect penis (Keuls 1985).

History includes few women's menstrual experiences. According to rumor, Joan of Arc (Delaney, et al. 1988: 204) never menstruated. Bloody Mary, Queen of Scots (1516-1558), suffered from a chronic lack of her menstrual periods. Queen Elizabeth the First of England (1533-1603) also had infrequent periods, or so said the royal laundress (Delaney, Lupton and Toth 1988, 204). Queen Marie Antoinette bled excessively several days before her execution. Her last personal act before dying was to hide her bloodstained gown in a crevice in the wall behind the stove (Delaney, Lupton and Toth 1988, 204). George Sand (1804-1876) mentions her bad time of the month circumspectly in an attempt to cover up her first adulterous affair (Maurois 1954, 94). Some say that the British poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1861) took opium for her menstrual cramps (Delaney, et al. 1988: 204). Emma Goldman (1869-1940), the socialist organizer and writer, was called Red Emma the Witch, because of her

politics, not because of her menstrual periods, which were few and painful, especially during stressful times (Goldman 1970). Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) writes in her diary February 18, 1928 that her menstrual flow is the flow of ideas to her brain (Woolf 1954). Court records tell Lizzie Borden's (1860-1927) menstrual tale. When her menstrual period coincided with an epileptic attack, she axed her parents to bloody death. Menstruation was such an unspeakable subject that Lizzie was able to confuse the jury by saying that the blood all over her skirt was not the blood of her father and stepmother but menstrual blood. She explained to the all male jury that at the time of the incident she had fleas (a euphemism for menstruation) (Lincoln 1967).

In contrast to the Greek attitude, the older Hebrew attitude, as recorded in the Hebrew Bible, (Leviticus 15:19-33) records that the Hebrews separated menstruating girls for seven days out of fear of the potency of the blood. Not only is the power in the blood, it is in the menstruating woman who can make anything or anyone she touches unclean by her touch alone; this includes a taboo against sexual relations with a menstruating woman that remains operative for many people in modern, western society (Delaney, Lupton and Toth 1988, 16).

According to John 4:9, Jesus shared a cup with a menstruating woman of Samaria. Thus, he broke the taboo of touching the cup made unclean by contact with a bleeding female. This woman had been bleeding for twelve years. She approached Jesus from behind and was cured by the mere touch of the hem of his gown. Jesus says to her,

> Thy faith hath made thee whole (Matthew 9:20-22, Mark 5:25-34, Luke 8:43-48).

For Christians, this story illustrates that the purifying effect of Jesus is strong enough to banish even the extreme impurity of the bleeding female (Brown 1963). Jesus may have conquered the menstrual taboo theologically, but as a practical matter, menstrual taboos continued to exist in Christendom in the form of old wive's tales on the popular side and hidden in the medical myths and elsewhere. The Christian female puberty rite teaches females to hide menstruation (Grahn, 1999, p. 280). In Christian cultures girls are not hidden when they menstruate; instead they are taught to use supplies that will catch the menstruation and then dispose of the bloody materials in special containers or in the trash, often wrapped in paper to hide the blood.

The ancient world's most dreaded poison was menstruation, called, *moon-dew*, used by the witches of

Thessaly. This frightening poison was a girl's first menstrual blood, collected in a ritual during the eclipse of the moon (Graves 1974, 166ff). I found no record of how this ritual menstrual blood collection was accomplished (possibly because the dangerous association with witchcraft made writing down instructions improbable). Perhaps one reason western women have often kept silent about their menstrual experiences is out of an almost forgotten memory of Christian reprisals.

The Roman, Pliny the Elder (c.23-79 C. E.), writes in his *Natural History* that contact with menstrual blood turns new wine sour, crops touched by it become barren, grafts die, seeds in gardens are dried up, the fruit of trees fall off, the edge of steel and the gleam of ivory are dulled, hives of bees die, even bronze and iron are at once seized by rust, and a horrible smell fills the air; to taste it drives dogs mad and infects their bites with an incurable poison. Reportedly the ant is sensitive to menstrual blood. If an ant contacts grain tainted with the blood it is repelled, according to Pliny (Pliny 1942, 549).

Pliny's list of the dangers of menstrual blood is eerily mirrored in the infamous *Malleus maleficarum*, the witch hunter's handbook of the Europe's middle ages. Instead of menstrual blood that carries the powers of

destruction, it is the woman as witch who carries the identical powers (Delaney, Lupton and Toth 1988, 38-39).

Thomas Aquinas (1224/5-1274) codified Aristotle's sexist view of the feminine. Menstruation was proof that a woman is a misbegotten male (Aquinas 1948, 880).

Certainly menstruation fits the description of being deeply hidden in western experience and far removed from patriarchal consciousness that creates patriarchal knowledge.

Hegel (1770-1831), the German idealist philosopher, takes the Aristotelian view of menstruation. He uses the female menses as exemplary of the female's undeveloped unity and as confirmation that the male is the active principle and the female is the receptive principle. This is an important point because Hegel asserts further that procreation must not be reduced to a composition of both the male and the female but more rightly as a material contribution by the female and the contribution of subjectivity given by the male (Hegel 1998, 278).

Subjectivity is the active principle. Hegel articulates the patriarchal perspective that the female is the object of the male subject. When Hegel talks about an *undeveloped unity* he is not simply talking metaphorically. Hegel describes the clitoris as a partially developed penis

(Hegel, 1998, p. 278). According to Hegel, this accounts for the fact that women do not experience orgasms. Perhaps the fact that men and women learned that women could not have orgasms is a partial explanation of why women had such difficulties having orgasms in patriarchal conditions (Koedt 1970).

Aristotle's influence also extended to the medical understanding of menstruation. His view of menstruation as a sign of female inferiority explained the passive part females played in reproduction (738b22-2). Menstruation is immature semen, just as a woman is an impotent man (728a16-21; 728a26-30) (Aristotle 1995). He says,

> Menstrual blood has in its nature an affinity to the primitive matter (729a21-34) (Aristotle 1995).

This text was the standard treatise on the subject for almost two thousand years (Delaney, Lupton and Toth 1988, 45). In many ways the current medical view of menstruation as a by-product of the reproductive system is similar to Aristotle's view of menstruation as a wasted nutrient for a not-yet-conceived fetus. Both Aristotle and the medical profession understand menstruation as proof of a lack in females. The non-western knowledge that menstruation is

sacred, holy material with the potential to destroy and to create has been almost eliminated in western traditions.

The current medical explanation of menstruation is composed of parts of the medical myths of the past that do not honor menstruation or the rituals surrounding it.

Besides the similarity with Aristotle's model, the medical model also retains part of a tradition that considered the menses to be an overflowing of something women have too much of. Pythagoras (c. 550-c.500 B. C. E.) saw menstruation as the elimination of extra blood. Empedocles (c. 495-435B. C. E.) explained the menses as the evacuation of density, not blood. Parmenides (fl. c. 480 B. C. E.) thought women had too much blood that had to be eliminated monthly because she is hotter than men. Galen (129-c. 200 C. E.) thought women had an overabundance of fluids because they were idle and because they were kept inside the house for years.

Avicenna (980-1037 C. E.), the Arab physician and philosopher known as the Supreme Master, agreed with the plethora theory but he added that menstruation is eliminated through the uterus because that organ is the weakest and the last formed (Delaney, Lupton and Toth 1988, 42). The influential physician Regnier de Graaf (after

whom the ovarian follicle is named) added the following analogy to Avicenna's ideas. De Graaf said,

> The menstrual blood escapes by the feeblest parts of the body, in the same way that wine or beer undergoing fermentation escapes by the defective parts of a barrel (Fluhmann 1939, 19-20).

The scientific explanation of menstruation says that it is a biological given, the meaning of which is unaffected by any human practice. It is part of the female reproductive system without any ritual component whatsoever. In this model, the menses is a sign of failed reproduction (Martin 1990). Menstruation is the weeping of a disappointed uterus, according to a medical textbook, the *Principles of Gynecology* (1975).

In the first half of the twentieth century, there were a number of scientific studies that unsuccessfully attempted to identify a chemical in women's menstruation, termed a *menotoxin*, that would explain the miraculous and varied powers attributed to it in so many cultures (Bryant, Healthcote and Pickles 1977) (Freeman and Looney 1934) (Smith & Smith 1950). The total failure of these experiments to isolate a physical basis for the mythologies about the powers of menstrual blood cannot be taken as a definitive statement that no such physical component

exists, but it does cast doubt on the theory that the magical powers of menstruation are reducible to a chemical compound. This is an example of pre-feminist science that was limited by the terms of materialism.

The taboos of western culture were mostly successful in keeping the historical record relatively clear of explicit menstrual stories, but as anyone who has ever tried knows, secrets are hard to keep.

As far back as Classical Greece, there are examples of images or practices that suggest the female genitalia, menstrual ritual, and menstruation.

The Sibyls of ancient Greece may have used a kind of tripod as a speculum for watching each other's cervixes for signs of the first blood as part of the science of divination (Shuttle and Redgrove 1988, 147). It is likely that the indigenous people that preceded and coexisted with the Classical Greeks *read* the drops of a maiden's first bleeding.

Even more ancient people were probably reading emanations of the menstrual drops on a cosmic scale (Grahn, 1999, p. 181). The ancestral people appreciated menstrual blood as instructional material. Grahn puts it this way,

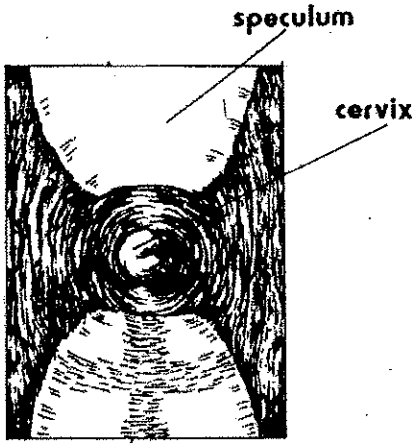
> The reading of drops of menstrual blood was a widespread method of divination that I think may be an

original source of astrology and augury (Grahn, 1999, p. 287).

This speculation about the connection between menstruation and the deepest roots of astrology is provocative. It calls to mind the assertion of a connection that has been made between the archetypal imprinting at birth of astrological relationships (Grof M. D., 1998) (Grof M. D., 1985)

It is possible that the frequent depiction of the birth-cone, the single eye representation of the goddess, the shape of a beehive as seen from the top and the world-navel are depictions of a cervix as seen through a speculum (Shuttle and Redgrove 1988, 181).

Illustration



This is a drawing of a cervix as seen through a speculum by a twentieth century artist, Karen Sjoholm (*The*

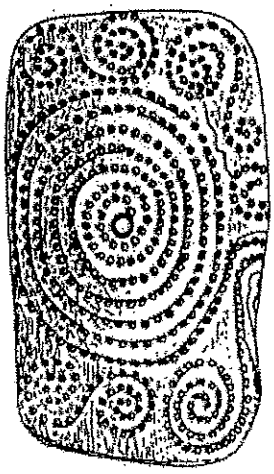
Proceedings of the Menstrual Extraction Conference, 1974, 21).

According to traditional scholarship, this shape is called the *navel* or in Greek, *omphalos*, in Hebrew *beth-el* (dwelling place of the deity). *The Oxford Classical Dictionary, Second Edition* says that stones in the shape of the *omphalos* were cult-objects of the most primitive religion of the Aegean region. These were reminders of a past that had been long forgotten. The *omphalos* of any place is its center, its origin. The Greek *omphalos* was located in the center of the temple at Delphi (*delphus* is one Greek word for womb). Its shape is sometimes compared to a beehive as seen from the top (*The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 1970).

The theme of the sacred center or middle is mirrored in a wide variety of cultures. Persians say their country is in the middle, China is the *Middle Kingdom*, and so is Japan. Scandinavians call their land *Middle Earth*, Romans placed an *omphalos* at the temple of Vesta; Jews placed it at the temple of Zion and Christian lore says that a spear that stands upright at the tomb of Jesus Christ casts no midday shadow because it is the center of everything under the sun. The story is that Jesus died at the exact spot

where the original Tree of Life grew in the primal garden (Walker 1996, *omphalos*).

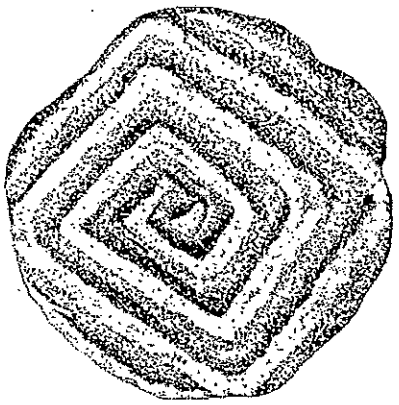
Drawing



Here is one example of what might be considered a cervical image from the engraving on a mammoth tooth (dated c 24, 000 B. C. E.). Marija Gimbutas cites this as an example of a snake coil and spiral; both are symbols that are associated with the Goddess in the upper Paleolithic period from which it dates (Gimbutas 1991, 89).

Images such as this one might be an expression of a cervical image or the cervical image might be an expression of an archetypal image. More likely, it is a result of the relationship between the literal image and the archetype. In this dissertation I am open to multiple interpretations.

Illustration



Here is a seal c. 5500B.C.E. (Gimbutas 1991, 29).

Illustration

Here is a pot with the spiral shape design from an area in the current Romania about sixty-two hundred years ago. This is an Original drawing by Julia Boekelheide from Plate 22 in *Language of the Goddess* by Marija Gimbutas.

According to Marija Gimbutas, the feminist archeomythographer who reinterpreted ancient artifacts as

evidence of prepatriarchal culture, this image is among the set of geometric motifs that constitute a metaphysical alphabet of symbols related to the Bird Goddess of Old Europe (Gimbutas 1991, 1). This shape is found in and on seals, pottery, dishes, architecture, and tattoos, among other places.

The mythological Holy Grail and the bleeding Christ are two examples of what some consider to be unconscious expressions of menstrual mythology. The cup or chalice is often a symbol of overflowing abundance, a vessel providing nourishment. It is also a representation of the womb. The sacred menstrual cup was transformed into a cauldron when it was replaced by the chalice of sacrificial blood, which later became a symbol in the Eucharist--the cup containing Christ's blood (Shuttle and Redgrove 1988, 17; Stewart 2000, 144). Possibly when Christians are taking Holy Communion, they are unconsciously acting out a much older menstrual ritual.

Photograph

Christ bleeds out of his side into a chalice (Bynum, 1988).

According to Doctor Carl Jung, the alchemist, Dorn, calls the *vas pellicanicum* the vessel of transformation and says that with its help the *quinta essentia* can be extracted from the *prima materia* (Jung 1983, 87). According to an anonymous alchemical scholar,

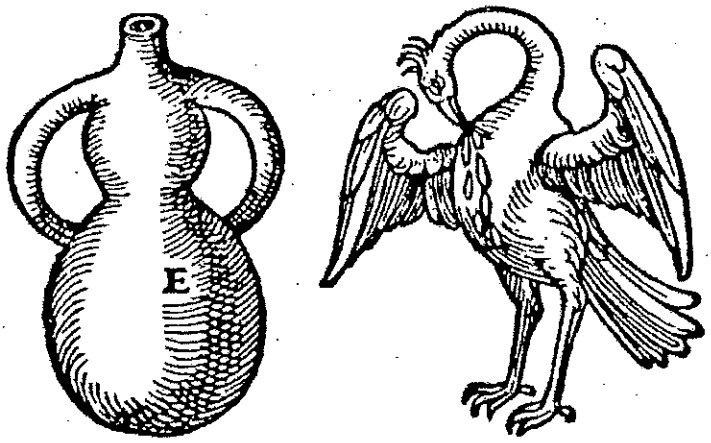
> This vessel is the true philosophical Pelican, and there is none other to be sought for in all the world (Jung 1983, 87).

The stork, like the pelican, is a *vas culatorium* (a vessel for circular distillation) (Jung 1983, 316). This may mean that the Pelican represents the essence of

humanity, in other words, consciousness. Jung says that comparisons are often made between the Pelican and the lapis, the egg, and the dragon that devours itself and gives birth to itself. Christ's body is called *the vessel of the spirit* in the Epistle of Barnabas. Christ is the pelican who bleeds (Jung 1983, 87). A psychoanalytical interpretation takes the image of the pelican feeding its young from the blood of its chest as evidence that masculine consciousness originated with the women's menstrual periods (Shuttle and Redgrove 1988, 139).

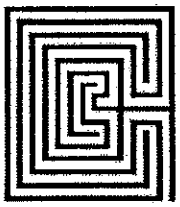
Carvings from New Guinea show images of a woman with a crocodile attacking her vulva. In a different image from the same area a hornbill plunges its beak into the woman's vagina. When her vagina is thusly attacked, a snake emerges (Hays, 1964, p. 40). These are two more examples that support the psychoanalytical understanding of the connection between menstruation and consciousness.

Drawing



This is an alchemical image from Rhenanus, reprinted by C. G. Jung (1983: B7).

Drawing

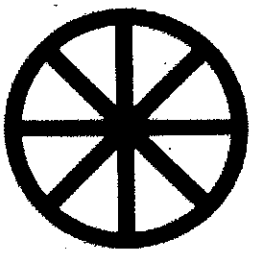


This is a Labyrinth.

The Labyrinth was originally the palace of *Minos*, the *Moon-King* whose spirit dwelt in the sacred bull. The labyrinth is an image of the journey of death and rebirth. Long ago the labyrinth was almost always associated with a cave at its center. Where there is a cave that has been identified as having been used in the past for ritual purposes, there is often a labyrinth either drawn or built at the entrance of the cave (Gadon, 1989, p. 106). The

presiding personage of the labyrinth is always a woman, mythical or actual (Neumann, 1971, p. 176). Christians appropriated the labyrinth symbol and used it in church floor patterns, gardens and hedges. A labyrinth lies at the center of Chartres Cathedral (Walker, 1996, pp. 523-534).

Drawing



The *Wheel of Fortune* is the karmic wheel of the Milky Way, or zodiac. The wheel circles,

> The outer reaches of the universe around the Goddess's yoni or *omphalos* (navel), her earth-centered hub (Walker, 1996, p. 1072).

In the Bronze Age sacred kings were killed at the end of office by being rolled downhill, fastened inside a fiery wheel that signified the sun. This was a reenactment of death and rebirth. The Norse deity Kris Kringle is sometimes called the *Christ of the Wheel* where he personifies the dying and reborn sun of the winter solstice. The Northern European tradition has it that the mystic wheels of existence stop turning at the moment the year changes from one to the next. During the winter

solstice, all rotating motions were taboo. Cartwheels went unturned and butter went unchurned. In spring, the opposite was true and the pagan rites included rolling down the hill. In these examples, rituals were used to embody, to hold and even to create the cosmos, as the people doing it understood it. The story that was told about these rituals was knowledge. They understood that rolling down the hill meant that the heavens turn.

Circumambulation and circling are aspects of menstrual ritual (Grahn, 1999; Jayakar, 1990). One name for the eastern prayer wheel is the *Divine Midwife*. One of many carnival manifestations of this wheel is the Fairies' Wheel, the ancestor of the Ferris Wheel of today (Walker, 1996, p. 1074).

In a different example of the spiral is found in a wooden puberty initiation mask from the Rovuma River area of Mozambique. Beaded spirals decorate the face in the middle of the forehead, on each cheek and on the chin (Leuzinger, 1967, p. 211).

Survey of Changes in Menstrual Practices

After more than twenty-five hundred years of menstrual rituals that hide and degrade menstruation, popular attitudes and popular behavior relating to menstruation became explicit to a degree previously unknown in western

civilization in the nineteen-seventies (Delaney, Lupton and Toth 1988, 122) (Grahn, 1999, p. 280). Up until then convention forbade even mentioning menstruation in journalism, or polite company of any kind (*Woman in Sexist Society: Studies in Power and Powerlessness*, 1971, p. 469).

Seemingly, the traditional western menstrual practice of hiding menstruation was suddenly abandoned. Menstruation and menstrual paraphernalia were depicted in cartoons, represented in art, sung in songs, examined in films and joked about on television. Menstrual extraction is situated amidst this upsurge of menstrual-related activities. When taken by itself, menstrual extraction might be seen as a strange and isolated anomaly, but taken with all of the other radical departures from menstrual taboos, it is possible to view menstrual extraction as representative of a cultural change.

Judy Chicago's lithograph *Red Flag* (1971) is a mostly black-and-white image of a woman removing a brilliantly red tampon. Chicago wrote that one day she and three friends (all in their early thirties) discussed menstruation for the first time in their lives. This was the inspiration for *Red Flag* (Chicago, 1977, pp. 135-137).

Chicago contributed the *Menstruation Bathroom* to the collaborative installation piece constructed by women from

Cal Arts in Southern California, called *Womanhouse*. Like *Red Flag*, this is a study in bold contrasts; white gauze, white tile, and white porcelain are made even whiter when contrasted with red blood on menstrual pads and a stray tampon (Chicago 1977, 135-37).

In New York, Mary Beth Edelson's *Blood Mysteries* invited women to participate in the piece by adding their stories into one of four wooden boxes. There were four compartments to choose from, Menstruation Stories, Blood Power Stories, Menopause Stories, and Birth Stories.

Back in Los Angeles the feminist art gallery, *Womanspace*, sponsored *Menstruation Weekends*. The first such weekend is a thirty-minute tape collage of women talking about their menstrual experiences, mixed in with readings from women writers and stories of taboos in non-western cultures and accompanied by color slides of many images of blood. The conclusion was a symbolic tasting of menstrual blood (*The Power of Feminist Art: The American Movement of the 1970's. History and Impact*, 1994).

Other west coast women from Laguna Beach published and distributed an irreverent comic book, *Tits & Clits*, featuring frank menstrual themes (The Menses Is the Message, 1972).

In 1970 menstruation appears, albeit hesitantly, in feminist poetry. For example, in the collection, *edward the dyke and other poems* there is a poem that deals with menstruation, but it is an untitled poem that does not give its subject away until the final lines,

> …this poem is called
> how Naomi gets her period
> (Grahn, 1971).

In northern California the Berkeley Women's Music Collective sang *The Bloods* by Debra Lemke (Delaney, Lupton and Toth 1988, 125). Across the Atlantic, British feminist Germaine Greer (1970) suggested that women should liberate themselves by drinking their menstrual blood (Greer 1970, 126). Compared with that, the spontaneous gatherings of women in Bleed-Ins and Speak Outs do not seem so radical (Delaney, Lupton and Toth 1988, 241-42).

Nineteen seventy-three and nineteen seventy-four were good years for menstruation and film. *Travels with My Aunt*, *MacCabe and Mrs. Miller* and *They Shoot Horses Don't They?* are just a few examples where menstruation is mentioned casually. Anyone who has seen Ingmar Bergman's *Cries and Whispers* must surely remember when the wife cuts her own

genitals to avoid sex with her husband. Whatever one makes of this scene, it is not easily forgettable (1973). I found the scene disturbing because it made me conscious of the delicate tissues of my vagina.

The menstrual barrier was broken on American television by the taboo-breaking show, *All in the Family,* when they aired an episode called, "The Battle of the Month" (March 24, 1973). Six months later in *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* episode, Mary and Rhoda solidify their friendship by telling their first menstruation stories (September 29, 1973). After that, menstruation became fair grist for comment, comedy, and drama.

The telling and retelling of menstrual stories is (another) taboo-breaking activity. In the seventies, at least two books consciously retold them in an effort to bring menstrual stories into the open and free women of the shame attached to menstruation. The two books, *The Curse: A cultural history of menstruation* (1976) by Janice Delaney, Mary Jane Lupton, and Emily Toth and *Menstruation and Menopause: The Physiology, and Psychology, the Myth and the Reality* by Paula Weideger (1977) took significant steps toward deconstructing myths about menstruation; neither tells menstrual stories in the first person but they did help break down the barriers to doing so. Telling menstrual

stories in the first person in a traditional western context is the next level of taboo-breaking behavior.

Some authors have collected contemporary menstrual stories because they want to reclaim the power of menstrual blood (Owen 1993). Most of these authors study menstruation as a cultural artifact. Their point is that even though menstruation is a nearly universal physiological process among females, it is characterized by specific historical, cultural, and personal meanings and practices. From their point of view, menstruation is a maturational event that originates from inside the female body and collides with meanings and practices that originate from outside the female body (Lee and Sasser-Coen 1996, 14-15). Most of these studies focus on how women experience the ambivalent cultural messages that accompany menstruation. (Lee and Sasser-Coen 1996; Martin 1987; *Body/Politics: Women and the Discourses of Science*, 1990, 78) (Laws 1990).

Penelope Shuttle and Peter Redgrove looked at menstruation from a psychoanalytical perspective in their book. *The Wise Wound: The Myths, Realities, and Meaning of Menstruation* (1978).

> The evolutionary change from the estrus cycle to the menstrual cycle implies that sexual libido became available for something other than the perpetuation of the species by the reproduction of offspring. That *something other* is the enhancement of life produced by

> shared sexual experience between individuals. An act of sex became this, rather than simple impregnation of the female. From the appearance of the menstrual cycle therefore dates all the evolutionary developments which have been seen as specifically human: viz. the development of mentality, symbolism (a mental child is a symbolic child), recognition and valuing of the individual and social organization (Shuttle & Redgrove, 1988, p. 136).

The authors tell the story of their experience with the self-help clinic. Peter and the other men were present for the first part and then they left for the self-examination component. When they returned,

> It was not surprising that there was a very palpable feeling of sisterhood in the room among the women. It was of course equivalent to, though more mature than, a group of males comparing penises. The feeling was there, in the air, like a perfume or an agreeable conspiracy. They had of course been showing each other their deep femininity, the birth-cone of the womb in its place of entry at the top of the vaginal passage. (Shuttle & Redgrove, 1988, p. 179).

Menstrual extraction - A New Menstrual Ritual

A good description of the basic self-help clinic presentation is found in the 1972 bestseller, *Vaginal Politics: Who Controls A Woman's Body: Doctors? Lovers? Drugs? Women?* by Ellen Frankfort, a writer for the Village Voice (Frankfort, 1972). Frankfort, a harsh critic of menstrual extraction, opens her book with a first-hand report of her experience at a self-help clinic she attended in New York City, held in a church basement. Frankfort

captures the scene that occurred in cities, towns, and villages across North America and far beyond around the globe. At a time when abortion was illegal in many states and countries, when doctors and drug companies were unquestioned authorities and *good* girls did not get too involved *down there*, the experience of being with a roomful of half-clad women, one women splayed on a desk, table or on the floor with the others gathered around her, peering into her vagina, is an experience not easily classified or forgotten. Frankfort is a typical example of a reporter who captured the scene she observed, but she stopped there. I want to use the stories of the women who were involved to go beyond the surface in order to question the meaning of what was going.

Frankfort's wary attitude towards menstrual extraction was representative of many women and men of the time who disdained mere laywomen and their projects[1]. Ironically, the doctors who responded to her articles in the *Village Voice* did not match Frankfort's criticism of menstrual extraction as "extremely dangerous" or her concern for safety. Instead of mirroring Frankfort's alarm, the doctors

1.Frankfort uses the titles and full names of all her resources except those of the self-help clinic women. She uses the first names only and even then she misspells one. Frankfort does not seem able to credit a group of ordinary women with making up a medical idea and defining it without doctors, academics, or other qualified people. The self-help presentations were public and the presenters did not seek anonymity.

were overwhelmingly concerned about menstrual extraction and self-help because of the independence it gave women (Frankfort, 1972, p. 203).

The self-help group's open sharing of information produced evidence that the so-called scientific *facts* of gynecology were inconsistent with the experience of women. In some instances, it appeared that the doctors were motivated more by professional self-interest than providing the best medical care. According to Section 2141 of the Business and Professions Code, pregnancy was a disease. Medical schools did not teach doctors how to do abortions. When the self-help group researched birth control choices they found a pattern of drug companies and doctors using only female patients (with the exception of experimentation on male prisoners) as research objects (Frankfort 1972, 11-2; Federation of Feminist Women's Health Centers 1986). Perhaps because of the high degree to which women's biological lives had been medicalized by western science, women presented themselves for medical care more frequently and more predictably than men. The record shows women lined up to try the newest scientific technologies, were often unwitting guinea pigs for the newest scientific experiments (Seaman 1972; Ehrenreich and English 1978, 280; Ruzek 1978, 15-17).

The self-help clinic groups promoted a wide variety of home remedies and low-tech self-health care as an alternative for total dependence on western medicine. They collected home remedies for normal conditions as well as for birth control and abortion. Then they distributed the information as widely as possible.

Until 1973, medical abortion was strictly denied women. In nearly all states in the United States helping a woman get an abortion was considered a criminal act. Over one million American women each year underwent criminal abortions; an estimated ten thousand women paid with their lives (Frankfort 1972, xxiv). Criminal abortions were often unsanitary, possibly dangerous, and sometimes deadly. Even giving out information on the subject was a criminal offence. Pat Maginnis and Lana Phelan, authors of the *Abortion Handbook* (1969), had been arrested many times for giving out such very basic information as the name of abortionists in Tijuana.

Menstrual extraction was one potential answer to this situation. The idea was that women who had worked together in advanced self-help groups could learn to extract their periods without the intervention of doctors or lawyers and without legal restrictions. The group did not promote this procedure on a mass level because it was untried and

potentially hazardous (Ruzek 1978, 127), but the group decided that the potential helpfulness of this procedure was worth the risk of practicing on themselves (*The Proceedings of the Menstrual Extraction Conference*, 1974).

The entire self-help approach drew fire from the medical community they seemed to supplant. The Los Angeles police department raided the self-help-clinic meeting place after an intense undercover sting type operation conducted by the Board of Medical Examiners. Carol Downer and Colleen Wilson were arrested on many counts of practicing medicine without a license (Rosen 2000). The irony of using undercover agents to infiltrate a public group was probably not lost on the jury who acquitted Downer on all charges in a trial that attracted national attention (Wilson's case was settled in a plea bargain).

The proponents of menstrual extraction define it as both a technology and as a collaboration (Federation of Feminist Women's Health Centers 1986, 112; Ruzek 1978, 127) menstrual extraction a woman is empowered to

> ence over changes in her body which she
> ntrol before, in order to eliminate
> liscomfort or inconvenience or an unwanted
> ederation of Feminist Women's Health
> 122).

Debra Law, reporting on the findings of the first three years of menstrual extraction at the Menstrual Extraction Conference in San Francisco in 1974, says,

> Menstrual extraction is much more than the technique. It is also the setting, the close community of women, the information sharing, and the simple answer to our need.

Law reported that for three years *advanced* self-help clinics collected data and reported to the National Clearinghouse in Los Angeles. According to Law, the most significant finding about menstruation, the menstrual cycle and menstrual extraction is that the width and breath of the variation between one woman's experience and other women's experiences are only equaled by the width and breath in the variation of each woman's own menstrual career (Kaufert 1986). Law reported that the process-oriented approach to research has resulted in necessarily slow results. Law underlined the point that menstrual extraction is still being studied. She said that, although there have been no reports of significant side effects, she and the other advocates of self-help health care strongly recommended that every woman have a speculum in her bathroom, but they did not advocate that every woman have a

menstrual extraction device (*The Proceedings of the Menstrual Extraction Conference*, 1974, 34-35).

Within the self-help setting, knowledge was created on a fundamental level from the acts of self-cervical examination and menstrual extraction, as well as the other practices, such as keeping track of the cyclical changes through cervical photos or drawings in order to recognize the daily changes. In the past in western civilization, countless generations of women lived and died without ever catching even a glimpse of their own vagina or cervix. It is unknown how many women hid menstruation from themselves, but the intensity of the menstrual taboo suggests the number is high. Menstruation becomes visible when it flows out of the uterus through the vagina. Mostly, it appears as a drip or a stain or a smear.

It can be assumed that each woman had some experiences with her body, including those with her vagina, her uterus, and her menstruation; but without any visual contact with her or anyone else's cervix and vagina or any other reference point (such as a photograph of a vagina or a cervix), each woman's self-image was open to whatever demeaning personal or social pressures surrounded her. In the western world (in much of the rest of the world as well), a woman did not have access to the information or

the means to know her own body. When the authorities decreed that her body was proof that she was merely an impotent male (as did Aristotle) (Aristotle 1995, 728a16-21) or when she was told that her body confirmed that she was only an undeveloped unity (as Hegel believed) (Hegel 1998, 278) or when she heard that her body made her vulnerable to insanity (as Freud held) (Freud 1961, 12: 236), a western woman did not have access to the knowledge that would serve as a counterpoint. The knowledge I refer to is that women's vaginas, cervixes, and menstruation have intrinsic, aesthetic and cosmological value. This is the knowledge the women uncovered with self-cervical examination.

Menstrual extraction is a medical procedure (Stewart, et al. 1979). It is also an example of grass-roots research (research done outside of the academy's structure) (Ruzek 1978). Menstrual extraction was a political tool used by women to obtain reproductive rights and freedoms (Delaney, Lupton and Toth 1988). Menstrual extraction was a way to circumvent restrictive abortion laws when a woman who was potentially pregnant did not want to be (*When Birth Control Fails: How to Abort Ourselves Safely*, 1979). Menstrual extraction was a direct result of the self-help clinic project, which changed women's conscious perception of who

they were in the latter half of the twentieth century, mostly in the United States.

The definition of menstrual extraction, in a sense, lies in a region of contested territory. The patriarchal authorities (represented by the medical profession, the media, and the legal system) tried many different ways to assert their own definition of menstrual extraction, but they were never completely successful (Stewart, et al. 1979; Ruzek 1978). Through the change in consciousness there was new information created that needed new language to express it.

The controversy remains to this day. Not even all feminists credit the definition of menstrual extraction to its designers: Ruth Rosen, an historian of the women's liberation movement, is typical of feminists for whom menstrual extraction is simply an evasively-named early abortion (Rosen 2000, 177).

This study deals with the stories of women who practiced menstrual extraction because these women experienced life outside of the patriarchal structure and inside the *contested territory*. The stories of menstrual extraction are potentially stories about liminal experiences. Liminality is the state of being at the threshold of a transition. It is in being in between or in

marginal areas where the boundaries between one stage and the next are permeable.

It is when a situation is logically impossible that novelty and creativity, which always transcend logic, can arise.
Edgar Morin
(Morin 1999, 107)

Chapter Two

Brief Discussions of Ideas Used in this Exploration

This chapter consists of short discussions of eighteen terms or concepts and how they are used within the dissertation. In trying to understand menstrual rituals in a new way, I draw on insights from several disciplines. This allows me to look at menstrual rituals from several perspectives.

This inquiry draws on ideas from psychology, depth psychology, philosophy, anthropology, cultural anthropology, mythography, archeo-mythology, paleo-anthropology, and others. While I recognize that some of the theories may be flawed, and even sexist or dated, I cite them because they affected my understanding of menstrual rituals.

The topics are: consciousness, culture, essentialism, evolution, meaning, metaformic theory, metaphor, myth, patriarchy, pollution, ritual, sacred people, sacred things and sacred places, taboo, and transformation.

Consciousness

In this dissertation, I use the term *consciousness* in more than one way. There are many definitions of consciousness. I discuss some of them in order to give a flavor of the variety of ways it is used in this study.

Human consciousness is one expression of consciousness (de Quincey, 2000). Christian de Quincey (2000) finds evidence of consciousness everywhere, including in matter. He considers that matter and consciousness are co-creative. De Quincey defines consciousness from the metaphysical perspective of panpsychism. Panpsychism is a view that recognizes that both the body and mind contribute to consciousness, but consciousness is not reducible to either.

In this paper, I am talking about human consciousness as a specific instance of consciousness. De Quincy's definition is helpful because it describes human consciousness in the context of a conscious world instead of in the limited context of one body at a time. This study profited from De Quincy's definition of consciousness.

Definitions of human consciousness are varied in ways that shift the emphasis from one aspect to another without losing the shared qualities of the wider definition.

There is the *consciousness* that means human consciousness. I equate this use of the word with meaning-making and culture. *Consciousness* is what enables humans to create culture. To possess human consciousness is to possess the power to make the world meaningful. Human consciousness is only one aspect of consciousness.

There is the *consciousness* that results from the activity of consciousness-raising. In this definition, awareness is the key to understanding the word. Women met in consciousness raising groups to share their life experience. By becoming aware of the parts of life that are personal and those that are common to the female experience, consciousness of the participants was changed. The consciousness-raising techniques used by the women's liberation movement came from China. The groups were based on the Maoist slogan,

The personal is political (Sherfey, 1970, p. xxiii).

Jean Gebser, in *The Ever-Present Origin* (1985) introduces his own vocabulary to help express his ideas about consciousness. For Gebser,

> Consciousness is a new emerging reality in which intensity and action, the effective and the effect co-exist: one where origin, by virtue of *presentation* blossoms forth anew: and one in which the present is all-encompassing and entire. Integral reality is the

> world's transparency, a perceiving of the world as truth: a mutual perceiving and imparting of truth of the world and of man and of all that transluces both (Gebser, 1985, p. 7).

Gebser's study of consciousness led to his discovery the emergence of a new form of thought (Gebser, 1985, p. 546).

Judy Grahn's idea is that human consciousness is a variation of animal consciousness, and whose origin is theoretically traceable to an original abstract thought stemming from a relationship and held in place by repeated ritual performances. Human consciousness is the result of a process of ritual making and interpretation. The first rituals were menstrual rituals. They were acts that were performed as a survival strategy to protect the group. Bleeding members of the group were hidden in trees as protection from predators. Month after month, bleeder after bleeder, the group hid the dangerous one who bleeds from predators that smell the menstrual blood. Ancestral humans hid the bleeders over and over again, each menstrual period. The project of hiding the bleeding members was done in a rhythm with the phases of the moon. The original act of noticing the synchronic relationship between the hiding of the members and the moon was the original act of consciousness. It was the original human act of making a

metaphoric connection between two unlike things. In this way, human consciousness was originally structured by a menstrual practice. One way to look at human consciousness is as *consciousness* of menstrual-based ideas which Grahn calls *metaforms*.

Julian Jaynes is a psychologist who locates the source of consciousness in language, embedded in the tissues of the brain (Jaynes, 1990, p. 449).

In Jaynes' thought, consciousness is a product of language. Language precedes consciousness (Jaynes, 1990, p. 66). Jaynes argues that consciousness is not a necessary part of the learning process; therefore learning cannot be fundamental to consciousness. Jaynes says reason is a structure of the nervous system and not a part of consciousness (Jaynes, 1990, p. 42) (Jaynes, 1990, pp. 36-37). Jaynes distinguishes between reactivity and consciousness. Jaynes offers many examples to show that consciousness plays a very small role in our everyday lives (Jaynes, 1990, p. 25). Jaynes points out that concepts are not *in* consciousness. Animals have concepts of prey, etc. The importance of language is its ability to use a word to stand for a concept (Jaynes, 1990, pp. 30-32).

Jaynes says,

> Consciousness is an operation rather than a thing, a repository, or a function. It operates by way of analogy, by way of constructing an analog space with an analog *I* and other factors (Jaynes, 1990, pp. 65-66).

The general rule for Jaynes is: there is no operation in consciousness that did not occur in behavior first (Jaynes, 1990, p. 449).

In *The Origins and History of Consciousness* Neumann constructs a history of the evolution of consciousness from the viewpoint of Jung's depth psychology.

For Neumann,

> The human psyche is the source of all cultural and religious phenomena (Neumann, 1971, p. xvii).

Neumann begins with Jung's contention that there is,

> an *a priori* factor in all human activities, namely the inborn, preconscious and unconscious individual structure of the psyche. A newborn's pre-conscious psyche is not an empty vessel into which, given the proper conditions, anything might be poured. On the contrary, it is a tremendously complicated, sharply defined individual entity that appears indeterminate to us only because we cannot see it directly. As soon as visible manifestations of psychic life appear, they have an individual character, a *unique personality* (Jung, 1990, p. 77).

Jung acknowledges the difficulty of answering the question of why consciousness exists. On this point, he confesses faith that consciousness is a compulsion of the universe to express itself,

Someone had to realize that this wonderful world...exists (Jung, 1990, p. 95).

For Jungian psychology the explanation for the emergence of human consciousness is that humans have a *prototype* of consciousness and that the prototype is the division between the unconscious mind and the conscious mind (Jung, 1990, p. 101). Jung calls theses prototypes *archetypes*. Archetypes are the most ancient and universal thought forms: they are instinctual patterns (Jung, 1973b, p. 30) (Jung, 1961, p. 76). Jungian psychology describes the origin of consciousness as an expression of archetypes.

Jungian archetypes are real. Subjective entities exist, in a kind of simultaneous coalition with and in opposition to our physical human bodies. Archetypes should be regarded as objects and subjects, with laws of their own. He writes,

> We are compelled to treat them (archetypes) as subjects: in other words, we have to admit that they possess spontaneity and purposiveness, or a kind of consciousness and free will (Jung, 1973a, p. xiv).

The growth of culture consists, for Jung, in a progressive subjugation of the animal in man (Jung, 1961, p. 29). Neumann writes,

> Gradually instinctive reaction is suppressed in favor of consciousness (Neumann, 1971, p. 332).

Jung elaborates,

> The natural man is characterized by unmitigated instinct. The inheritance that opposes this condition consists of mnemonic deposits accruing from all the experience of his ancestors. People are inclined to view this hypothesis with skepticism, thinking that *inherited ideas* are meant. There is naturally no question of that. It is rather a question of inherited *possibilities* of ideas, *pathways* gradually traced out through the cumulative experience of our ancestors. To deny the inheritance of these pathways would be tantamount to denying the inheritance of the brain (Jung, 1969, p. 52).

Jung does not confuse instincts with archetypes nor does he minimize their relationship. For Jung, archetypes and instincts are *the most polar opposites imaginable*. The bond between archetypes and instincts is so close, however, that no position can be established or even thought of without its corresponding negation. They belong together as correspondences, as opposites who show a constant propensity to union (Jung, 1969, pp. 116-117). Jung writes,

> There are no amorphous instincts, as every instinct bears in itself the pattern of its situation. Always it fulfills an image, and the image has fixed qualities (Jung, 1969, p. 111).

Jung explains that every instinct fulfills an image. His example is of leaf-cutting ants who fulfill the image of ant, tree, leaf, cutting, transport etc. This idea is reminiscent of Plato's Eternal Ideas that exist independently in their own realm. Neumann writes,

> Consciousness is deliverance from the embrace of the primordial uroboric dragon (Neumann, 1971, p. 105).

For Jungians, the opposition between ego and body is an original condition of human consciousness (Neumann, 1971, p. 110).

The dragon Neumann is talking about is the Great Mother. He is saying that consciousness is male consciousness or patriarchal consciousness. Jung says that there is no consciousness without discrimination of opposites. He explains,

> This is the paternal principle, the *Logos*, which eternally struggles to extricate itself from the primal warmth and primal darkness of the maternal womb, in a word, from unconsciousness. Divine curiosity yearns to be born and does not shrink from conflict, suffering, or sin. Unconsciousness is the *primal sin*, evil itself. Therefore, its first creative act of liberation is matricide (Jung, 1990, p. 96).

Neumann uses this idea to explain the seemingly contradictory natures of blood as both mana and filth. He writes,

> This original bivalence of the archetype with its juxtaposed opposite is torn asunder when consciousness separates the World Parents. To the left, there is ranged a negative series of symbols--Deadly Mother, Great Whore of Babylon, Witch, Dragon, Moloch: to the right, a positive series in which we find the Good Mother who, as Sophia or virgin, brings forth and nourishes, and leads the way to rebirth and salvation. Here Lilith, there Mary: here the toad, there the

goddess: here a morass of blood, there the Eternal Feminine (Neumann, 1971, p. 322).

Neumann focuses on the role of males as actors, sometimes to the exclusion of women's contributions. As to how consciousness became externalized, Neumann credits the stress and danger faced by male groups when they roamed, hunted and fought (Neumann, 1971, p. 138).

Jung's position in *Symbols of Transformation* stresses the connection between the origin of consciousness and taboos. Jung counters the popular idea expressed by Levi-Strauss that the incest taboo is the foundational taboo. He says that it was the evolutionary instinct, peculiar to humans, which drove the many archaic taboos (the incest taboo among them) (Jung, 1976, pp. 418-419).

According to Neumann, the division between good and evil is not present in the beginning of consciousness. The qualitative differences were between what worked and what did not work. What worked was loaded with taboo and mana and what did not work, was not filled with taboo and mana (Neumann, 1971, p. 113). This sounds contradictory to western ears because the western idea is that things that are taboo have a connotation of being negative, of *not* working, but in non-western cultures taboos are often more associated with power than with good or not good.

Neumann recognizes that women have blood magic, and that shedding blood is a sacred act, but for him this is because the menstrual flow is related to pregnancy. Neumann gives cross-cultural examples of the bloodthirsty goddess responsible for war, fertility, and hunting, all of which he ties to menstrual blood, but to him menstrual blood is directly related to fertility, not consciousness (Neumann, 1971, pp. 55-56). Neumann calls the role blood plays in female taboos *decisive* from earliest times until deep into the patriarchal cultures where religions have caused males to turn away from all feminine matter as though from something numinous. The blood proves to men that women have a natural connection with the supernatural sphere (Neumann, 1971, p. 57).

When I use the term *consciousness*, I try to define what type of consciousness I mean.

Culture

Following Darwin's intuition in *Origin of Species*,

> If we possessed a perfect pedigree of mankind, a genealogical arrangement of the races of man it would afford the best classification of the various languages now spoken throughout the world, and if all extinct languages and all intermediate and slowly changing dialects, were to be included, such an arrangement would be the only possible one (Darwin, p. 351),

Luigi Luca Cavalli-Sforza and his son, Francesco Cavalli-Sforza, create a human family tree that shows the close relationship between the world's populations and linguistic families (Cavalli-Sforza & Cavalli-Sforza, 1995, p. 198) (Cavalli-Sforza, Menozzi & Piazza, 1994, pp. 98-99). Cavalli-Sforza and Paolo Menozzi map the worldwide geographic distribution of genes of over one hundred and ten traits in more than eighteen hundred aboriginal populations (Cavalli-Sforza, et al., 1994, p. 69). They chart population migrations and create a clock to reflect evolutionary history (Cavalli-Sforza, et al., 1994, p. 41). They create a genetic atlas of the world.

They make a strong case for the idea that culture had a single beginning place and time as opposed to many different spontaneous starts (Cavalli-Sforza, et al., 1994, p. 155) (Cavalli-Sforza & Cavalli-Sforza, 1995, pp. 144-145).

They rely on a dictionary definition of culture that emphasizes the informational aspects of culture. For them, culture is,

> The total pattern of human behavior and its products embodied in thought, speech, action, and artifacts, and dependent on man's capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations through the use of tools, language and systems of abstract thought (Cavalli-Sforza & Cavalli-Sforza, 1995, p. 206).

They describe as mysterious the method of cultural transmission that is passed from one generation to the next (Cavalli-Sforza & Cavalli-Sforza, 1995, p. 208).

In *Coevolution: Genes, Culture and Human Diversity*, William Durham says that,

> The new consensus in anthropology regards cultures as systems of symbolically encoded conceptual phenomena that are socially and historically transmitted within and between populations (Durham, 1991, p. 18).

This is markedly different than Edward B. Tylor's original anthropological definition (1871) of culture as,

> that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.

Recent approaches to culture emphasize the conceptual elements of culture, such as ideas, values, and beliefs that help to organize and shape human behavior, but are logically and empirically distinct from the actions themselves. The earlier conceptualizations of culture imagine that culture is a set of adaptations (Durham, 1991, p. 3).

Durham says that culture should be thought of not as behavior but as part of the information that specifies behavior's form (Durham, 1991, pp. 3-4).

Common anthropological opinion is that culture is heavily dependent upon *symbolizing*. Symbolic encoding

bestows conventional, non-sensory meaning upon things, places or acts.

Clifford Geertz, anthropologist, is a proponent of the ideational view of culture, sometimes called the symbols-and-meanings approach. According to Geertz,

> Culture is best seen, not as complexes of concrete behavior patterns--customs, usages, traditions, habit clusters--as has, by and large, been the case up to now, but as a set of control mechanisms, plans, recipes, rules, instruction (what computer programmers call *programs*)--for the governing of behavior (Geertz, 1973, pp. 44).

And,

> Culture is a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life (Geertz 1973: 89).

He says,

> Culture is the fabric of meaning in terms of which human beings interpret their experience and guide their actions: social structure is the form that action takes, the actually existing network of social relations (1973: 144-145).

Richard Dawkins, author of *The Selfish Gene* (1982), introduced the idea that culture is propagated through *memes*. Memes are the invisible equivalent of a gene that holds pieces of cultural information. The idea of memes

caught on and has been developed and integrated into varied theories of culture.

Chris Knight, anthropologist and author of *Blood Relations: Menstruation and the Origin of Culture* (1991) begins with the idea that culture has a collectivist origin, not an individualistic one. He writes,

> Symbolic culture involves very widespread levels of synchronized cooperative action. It is not merely an *adaptation*: it does not appear *naturally* when large-brained, two-legged hominids are set down in a congenial environment. It requires community members' participation in a universe of shared meanings which are not merely technological but also (and here lies the greater challenges) social, sexual, political, mythological and ritual (Knight, 1991, p. 4).

Knight defines human culture as having,

> its basis in the immortality of whole sets of extremely complex memes -- culture -- constituting instructions shaped not just by behavioral interaction between organisms and their environments, and derived not only from the genetically based phylogenetic conservatism of the species, but shaped also through the relationship between these and a highly specific, rich and accumulating fund of collective wisdom or tradition materialized in technology, design, language, art, kinship and so on (Knight, 1991, p. 13).

Knight emphasizes that politics is a key element required for complex memic patterns to be preserved. According to Knight,

> There could be no memic immortality in the absence of the essentially *political* capacity to establish agreements, rules and contracts. No human kinship system, no economic system, no religious community and indeed no cultural institution of any kind could function without these. Not even the simplest of collectively agreed or sanctioned contracts can occur in nature (Knight, 1991, p. 13).

Knight's research shows that,

> Our power to make and to enforce life-enhancing collective agreements has been with us since the very inception of culture (Knight, 1991, p. 15).

Knight begins with a biological statement;

> Ovulatory synchrony in local populations drives the ratio of sexually active males to females in groups towards one-to-one. Sustained male/female bonds on this basis mean greater paternity confidence, hence greater inclination on the part of males to invest in offspring. The evolutionary effect is to discriminate against philanderers in favor of more committed males.

> Human symbolic culture emerged out of struggle. Its rituals and myths were expressions of *counter dominance*--signals for thwarting exploitation by males. Culture, in short, was a female invention for the provisioning of babies. Through it, womankind resisted and brought to an end the male's time-honored biological status as the leisured sex (Knight, 1991, p. vii).

Knight interprets the snake image as an ancient menstruation-inspired construct which males appropriated for their own use. The image of the snake was *blood relations* in masculinized form. Knight identifies the image

of the snake as symbolizing total subjectivity, solidarity, and the image of organizing (Knight, 1991, p. 42).

Knight says this about the study of culture,

> The chief value of a study of human origins is that it demonstrates, firstly, that early life was communist (Engles 1972). Secondly it teaches us that revolution lies at the very heart of what we are. Far from it being the case that *no revolution can change human nature*, everything distinctively human about our nature--above all, our capacities for language, self-consciousness, symbolically regulated co-operation and creative work are precisely the products of that immense social, sexual and political revolution out of whose travails we were born (Knight, 1991, p. 4).

Daniel Dennett is a leading expert on human consciousness. His explanation of the appearance of culture is that, at a certain time in the past, an invasion began in a single species of multicellular organisms that were well suited for the invaders. The invaders are the memes, described by Dawkins (1976). In less than a hundred thousand years the memes transformed the apes into culture carrying persons (Dennett, 1995, p. 341).

Where do these memes come from and what types of replicators are they? Dennett says that memes, like genes, are invisible. Genes are carried by organisms: memes are carried by meme vehicles such as language, pictures or sayings. Memes are distinct memorable units; cultural units. Meme evolution is analogous to genetic evolution,

and it follows the laws of natural selection exactly. He notes that memes could not get started until there was a species--Homo sapiens--with brains to provide shelter and habits of communication that provide transmission media for the memes (Dennett, 1995, p. 347).

Unlike Plato's Eternal Ideas (1980), memes appear, compete, and then some survive and some disappear. This concept of culture as the expression of random and meaningless meme competition explains for Dennett how human culture arose:

> The invasion of human brains by culture, in the form of memes, has created human minds...(capable of creating)...the autonomy to transcend our selfish genes (Dennett, 1995, p. 369).

Dennett insists that culture must have a Darwinian origin which means that culture must grow out of something preexisting and every step along the way the results have to be what Dennett calls, *evolutionary enforceable*, meaning that nothing can just appear from nowhere (Dennett, 1995, p. 341). Dennett does not say that the memes came from "nowhere" but he does not say where they are from.

Susan Blackmore begins her discussion of memes where Dawkins and Dennett leave off (Blackmore, 1999, p. 1). For Blackmore, memes are to culture what genes are to

phenotype. Memes are units of cultural transmission, or units of imitation that spread for their own benefit (Blackmore, 1999, p. 6). Although this starting point seems to me to be a shaky one based on the vagueness of the definition and a slavish devotion[2] to the meme-is-like-a-gene analogy, Blackmore's insights into how culture is transmitted are interesting. Blackmore pushes her materialist theory to its limits and in the process she helps define those limits and she contributes to the discussion of what culture is and how it seems to propagate itself. Here is how Blackmore describes memes:

> Memes spread themselves around indiscriminately without regard to whether they are useful, neutral, or positively harmful to us...they will simply spread if they can (Blackmore, 1999, p. 7).

> Memes are instructions for carrying out behavior, stored in brains (or other objects) and passed on by imitation. Their competition drives the evolution of the mind. Both genes and memes are replicators and must obey the general principle of evolutionary theory and in that sense are the same (Blackmore, 1999, p. 17).

Blackmore rejects an evolutionary interpretation that reduces everything to biological or genetic advantage. Memetic theory posits that memes exist and replicate for

[2] Blackmore explains that, "Evolutionary theory describes how design is created by the competition between replicators" (Blackmore, 1999, p. 17). For Blackmore this justifies her loyalty to the meme as gene approach.

their own sake, not necessarily the sake of people (or their genes) (Blackmore, 1999, p. 30). This is the point that sets her apart from Dennett and Dawkins. As far as the evolution of culture or the creation of meaning, Blackmore boils the meaning of culture down to an expression of the interests of the genes and the memes as selfish replicators (Blackmore, 1999, p. 30).

Meme critic Mary Midgley (1994) wrote that the whole idea of memes is only an empty analogy. She calls them mythical entities that cannot have interests of their own. She says that memes are an empty and misleading metaphor, and a useless and essentially superstitious notion (Blackmore, 1999, p. 17).

Blackmore responds to Midgley by writing that Midgley misunderstands the idea of *power of their own* and therefore she misunderstands the strength and generality of evolutionary theory. She responds:

> Memes are no more *mythical entities* than genes are -- genes are instructions encoded in molecules of DNA -- memes are instructions embedded in human brains, or in artifacts such as books, pictures, bridges, or steam trains (Blackmore, 1999, p. 17).

Here, Blackmore reveals that she has reached a boundary imposed by a mechanistic materialist approach. Even though Blackmore recognizes that her memes seem to

have a subjectivity of their own, she dismisses this possibility by waving a Darwinian wand over the subject. This has the effect of focusing so completely on physicalities as to obscure the presence of a reality that she herself identifies but cannot see -- that is, that her memes might be active, not passive instruction units.

The point that memes are replicators in their own right and not subservient to the needs of genes marks the difference in other theories that have second replicators implicated. F. T. Cloak suggests that culture is acquired in tiny, unrelated snippets that he calls *corpuscles of culture* or *cultural instructions*. Though he does not use the replicator concept directly, he comes close to it in his conclusion:

> Our cultural instructions don't work for us organisms: we work for them. At best, we are in symbiosis with them, as we are with our genes. At worst, we are their slaves (Cloak 1975: 172).

Terrence Deacon, the Harvard neuroscientist, calls humans *the symbolic species* (1991). He argues that symbolic references provide the only conceivable selection pressure for the evolution of hominid brains to cross what Deacon calls the *symbolic threshold*. By symbolic reference he means the use of arbitrary symbols to stand for something

else (377). Deacon does not account for the origin of symbolic reference. He says that once true symbolic communication was possible simpler languages (now extinct) would have created selection pressure for bigger and better brains able to understand them and extend them (the languages). According to Deacon, early hominids could only have managed a hunting and provisioning strategy if they could regulate their reproductive relationships by symbolic means. He sees symbolic culture as a response to a reproductive problem that only symbols could solve: the imperative of representing a social contract (Deacon 1997: 401).

Deacon fails to explain how his symbolic threshold was crossed and he fails to consider how important a failure this might be. Deacon's theory is an attempt at a biological explanation consistent with the structural view of anthropology a la Levi-Strauss (1976) in which marriage taboos play the role of organizing the oldest societies. In Deacon's model language developed because of the advantage it attributes to the genes.

Erich Neumann explains culture from the view of a depth psychologist. He depicts culture as masculine in opposition to undifferentiated nature, the feminine. Neumann explains that the repression of the Mother is

> understandable and necessary from the point of view of the patriarchate and of a conscious development with strong patriarchal tendencies (Neumann, 1971, p. 324).

Penelope Shuttle and Peter Redgrove equate the history of menstrual experience with the history of cultures and of languages because menstruation has been associated with moon-experience, with phases of the moon and experiences of the moon. They write,

> Moon and menstrual experience are referred to in language, science, and mythology in terms which suppose them to be linked as the founders of civilization and menstrual experience (Shuttle & Redgrove, 1988, pp. 144-145).

Edgar Morin is a French post Marxist thinker. He says,

> Culture is a body of rules, knowledge, techniques, learning, values and myths, which allows for and insures the high complexity of human individuals and societies, and which, because it is not innate, needs to be transmitted and taught to each individual during his or her learning stage in order to perpetuate itself and maintain humanity's high anthropological complexity (Morin & Kern, 1999, p. 38).

Morin does not separate the human story from the universe story. He says,

> The Earth is not the sum of an addition: a physical planet, plus the biosphere, plus humankind. The Earth is a physical/biological/anthropological complex totality, in which life emerges from the Earth's history and humankind from earthly life's history (Morin & Kern, 1999, p. 44).

And,

> The tree of life is also a sphere of life. This sphere, in interaction with geoclimatic conditions, has created many niches that together constitute the biosphere (Morin & Kern, 1999, p. 36).

Morin's concurrent commitment to diversity and to unity is an important element in my study of culture. Morin is emphatic on this point,

> The Islamicist, the capitalist, the communist, the fascist have lost sight of their humanity: hence, the all-important necessity of unmasking, revealing, in and through its diversity, the unity of the species, human identity, and the anthropological universals (Morin & Kern, 1999, p. 42).

One challenge of the era is to learn how to cherish diversity in a world of global consciousness.

Essentialism or Red Herring?

I do not often use the term essentialism in this dissertation, but I include it in this short discussion on the topic because it is potentially relevant to any discussion of the female body because of the complex relationship the female body has to culture and to women personally. I do not use the word often because it does not contribute anything to my research.

Some feminists fear that when research is focused on uniquely female processes the effect will reinforce the idea that women are at the mercy of their biological destiny as breeders, and will therefore be doomed to take a back seat to male leadership in the public sphere (Lee and Sasser-Coen 1996, 6). Most essentialist-oriented arguments are raised to show that menstruation marks women as biologically destined to have babies and to tend the hearth (*The New Jerusalem Bible*, 1990). One of the early pieces of feminist knowledge was that powerlessness does not derive from the menstrual cycles (*Woman in Sexist Society: Studies in Power and Powerlessness*, 1971, p. 483).

People with vaginas have, in the past in western culture, had their identity reduced to the role they played for the benefit of the people with penises. For some women this was a good deal; for most it was not (Miles, 1989) (*Woman in Sexist Society: Studies in Power and Powerlessness*, 1971).

A different trend in essentialist arguments is that menstruation marks females as more fit than males to have political power (Eisler 1996, 291-93). This comes from the idea that since war, rape, and poverty are the hallmarks of patriarchy, and since patriarchy involves male domination of females, then the way to cure war, rape, and poverty is

for females to assert their essentially peaceful nature as a corrective. According to this view men imposed menstrual taboos and seclusion rituals on women (Miles, 1989, p. 51).

A significant aspect of essentialism is that it only works as an intellectual tool when it is based on dualistic principles. Dualistic thinking takes many forms. When applied to the issues concerning types of humans, dualism posits a contradiction between two sexes.

Feminist research on gender construction shows that there is no *woman* or *man* outside of the context of culture (de Beauvoir 1974; Keller 1986; Haraway 1989; *Body/Politics: Women and the Discourses of Science*, 1990). In other words, the two-sex model is only one model of genders among many possible models.

In a dualistic world, women menstruate, men do not; Men ejaculate, women do not. These are obvious *facts* to the average dualistic biologist.

I take issue with these *facts*. In this paper I discuss menstruation using many definitions, one of which is sacred bleeding. Sacred bleeding is not limited to any sex (or even to human beings); it is accessible to anyone with blood in their veins or their uteruses. Since this study is conducted in the western world where, officially, only women menstruate, I study women's menstrual practices. This

is the ritual that I have the most access to. I believe that my study could have been performed on contemporary circumcision ceremonies with valuable results. I think this because the blood is the instructing principle that carries the message via the ritual.

This is a very important point to understand about menstruation. When menstruation is understood as sacred bleeding, the subject is opened up in potentially productive and creative ways. In western culture menstruation is purported to be a female process, but this limited view is far from being universal. In other cultures men menstruate, the moon menstruates, rocks menstruate, plants menstruate and the earth menstruates (Lincoln 1981) (Knight 1983, 1991) (Jenett 2000) (Jayakar, 1990) (Grahn 1993). In the seventies, the women of Greenham Common[3] used the slogan, *Warfare is disguised menstruation*, making the point that war is a male bleeding ritual that can be replaced with a different, less deadly bleeding ritual (Shuttle and Redgrove 1988, 264).

A dualistic perspective of the sexes limits the range of our thinking. It limited Simone de Beauvoir, for example. On the one hand, she demolishes the patriarchal interpretation of the *facts* of menstruation, but, on the

other hand, she is unable to question the validity of the *facts* themselves. Like Aristotle, de Beauvoir sees the male as the active principle and the female as the passive principle. For her, even the gametes prove her point:

> Males create to maintain; females maintain to create (de Beauvoir, 1974, p. 40).

She quoted Frazer to make her point,

> Men make the gods; women worship them (de Beauvoir, 1974, p. 87).

She gives an adequate explanation of what people do in a patriarchal environment, but it is unsatisfactory for describing non-dual realities that are becoming common in the postmodern period in which the dominant European male paradigm is seen as one of many possible paradigms. Ultimately the existentialist position does not challenge the underlying dualism between nature and culture found in western culture (Tarnas 1991) (Spretnak 1991) (Spretnak 1997) (Wilshire 1989). The existentialist position accepts the dualistic assumptions of scientific materialism at the same time as it offers an incisive critique of these assumptions (Houppert 1999; Knight 1991; Weideger 1977).

---

[3] Greenham Common was the site of on-going anti-war demonstrations.

Similarly, for the scientific materialist, the universe is a collection of dead matter that is organized in an arbitrary pattern that is quantifiable and measurable (Tarnas 1991) (Spretnak 1991) (Spretnak 1997) (Wilshire 1989). When these assumptions are applied to culture, the result is that human culture is seen as a by-product of the arbitrary pattern of nature.

In the scientific materialist scenario, the significance of menstruation is limited to its role as a byproduct of reproduction. The best thing to do with it is to get rid of it as quickly and quietly as possible. Like all elements of nature, it is beneath contempt. As the missionary's sister, played by Katherine Hepburn in the movie African Queen, said to the Bogart character,

> Nature is what we are put on this earth to overcome (Huston 1951).

The second reason that the study of menstruation is not an essentialist enterprise is that the role played by menstrual ritual in human culture is not exclusive to either gender, but instead is related to human consciousness in general (Grahn 1993) (Knight 1991).

In Kerala, India, people with penises participate in rites imitative of menstrual rites by bleeding. Both men

and women bleed to embody the goddess as the active principle (Grahn, 1999, p. 291). Male devotees cut themselves to cause ritualized bleeding in ceremonies that replicate the essentials of menarche. To these religious believers, the power is carried in the blood and because males and females can bleed, both sexes have access to the creative cosmology that is held in place through bleeding rituals and festivals. If the stories accompanying these rituals were about pregnant women, males could not identify and embody the creative power, just as women cannot do so when God is solely imaged and storied as the father (Grahn, 1999, p. 290).

Examples of parallel male menstrual rituals, instances of stories about males who instigated the first menstruation and male participation in menstrual rituals may be examples of gender swapping. That is possible, but I think it better describes genderlessness. Genderlessness would mean that there were no significant roles attached to what westerners think of as the sex organs. Much has been written about the construction of gender as a way to explain why male and female roles are not consistent from society to society or from time to time (see Foucault (1986). Western feminists have been especially active in this field (see Keller (1986), Ortner (1974)). Their point

is to establish that women are equally capable and valuable members of society. *Biology is not Destiny* is a slogan of many western feminists. Could it be that among our ancestors there existed no recognizable gender difference between men and women? I presume that these ancestors had virtually the same anatomy as people have today; the difference is that the stories told about the bodies are different. Western culture is based on a story of two genders but this may be a cultural artifact, not naturally necessary.

The psychological truth that culture and consciousness came from menstruation is a parallel of the generally accepted zoological truth that the development of the menstrual cycle was responsible for the evolution of primates and their organization into societies (Shuttle and Redgrove 1988, 134). The zoological point is supported by evidence that when female sexual readiness was hidden from males, the groundwork was ready for social behavior between the sexes. The relevance of menstruation was felt equally by either sex.

My study treats menstruation in a non-dual way. Any hyper-identification with females at the expense of males is a result of the belief of western civilization that

menstruation is limited to females and does not reflect a lack of interest in male blood rituals on my part.

Evolution and Evolution of Consciousness

Since Darwin published the *Origin of the Species* in 1859, Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection (Darwin, pp. 126-128) has become the starting point for many scientific discussions of evolution for supporters and detractors alike. Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection is limited to the evolution of species, not to evolution of life itself.

Darwin's idea of the evolution of human consciousness seems to be that human consciousness emerged when social primates acquired an increased intellectual capacity. He imagines that the advent of language allowed humans to articulate the idea of self-sacrifice for the greater good of the community, thus becoming human (Darwin, pp. 471-472). Darwin put a heavy emphasis on the value of human beings. Thus, slavery and the mistreatment of women in less *civilized* nations (when compared to the western world) is his evidence of a natural evolutionary process (Darwin, pp. 491-493).

Dennett's argument is that mechanistic materialism is the only legitimate explanation available because it can

explain complexity from simplicity without resorting to subjective means. To Dennett's way of thinking, subjectivity is the enemy of scientific inquiry. Since Dennett reduces both meaning and consciousness to an epiphenomenon of the brain, Dennett rejects any quest that embraces mysteries or miracles because he thinks that this cheats by introducing subjectivity where answers should be (Dennett, 1995, p. 82). Dennett writes,

> Darwin explains a world of final causes and teleological laws with a principle that (…) is utterly independent of *meaning* or *purpose* (Dennett, 1995, p. 153).

When I use the term evolution in this dissertation, I am using the broadest definition that means change, not progress *per se*.

Gebser does not take an evolutionary view. He uses the term *mutation* to describe the discontinuous nature of events that occur in consciousness following the primordial leap of origin. This allows him to maintain the necessary detachment from concepts such as progress, evolution, and development. The biologizing of evolution describes a process that progresses away from the origin. Gebser points out that every mutation of consciousness is apparently a sudden and acute manifestation of latent possibilities, present since origin (Gebser, 1985, pp. 38-39).

Gebser resists the doctrine of evolution because it implies that what is past is gone as opposed to being with us as a moment of the ever-present origin. He argues vigorously that the manifestations of the mutational process of consciousness should never be considered to be a mere succession of events or a progression or a historical pattern (Gebser, 1985, p. 9). Gebser asserts that he has demonstrated that the emergence of consciousness is not ruled or defined by the principles of evolution. Gebser does not visualize an evolution of consciousness whereby one phase emerges from the former, dialectically or otherwise. Gebser sees manifestations of all the stages of consciousness in the world today (Gebser, 1985, p. 168).

In Gebser's system, the process of each new--discontinuous-- mutation of consciousness is a process of increasing intensity. This is inconsistent with the concept of evolution that describes the process of an unbroken chain of change but it is consistent with the neo-Darwinians such as Steven Jay Gould. Gebser cautions that while the unfolding is enrichment in that it is tied to a gain in dimensionality,

> It is also an impoverishment because of the increasing remoteness from origin (Gebser, 1985, p. 41).

Gebser identifies and describes five structures of consciousness; the archaic, the magical, the mythical, the mental, and the integral. He stresses that the first four structures do not represent the past, but a presence in everyone that is more or less acute or latent (Gebser, 1985, p. 42). Unique forms of thought mark each type of consciousness, each with its own set of manifestations. Each structure of consciousness can be identified by its corresponding relationship to perspectivity (the perspective from which it understands the world).

Aperspectival or integral perception began about one hundred years ago. Gebser's idea is that the major and unique theme that characterizes this shift in consciousness is "the irruption of time" into human experience. In a perspectival world, time is an analytical system of measurable relationships in a materialized form. In an aperspectival world time is a quality and an intensity that is immeasurable and not expressible in rational thought. This leads to freedom from the constructions of time as a reducible unit. The result is an opening of *space* in our consciousness, an opening of aperspectival space wherein the irrational is integrated with the perspectival rational.

The unperspectival world is collective and the perspectival world is individualistic. The unperspectival world is related to the anonymous *one* or the tribal *we* and the perspectival world is related to *I* or the Ego. The one world is grounded in *Being*, the other, beginning with the Renaissance, in *Having*. The former is predominately irrational, the later rational (Gebser, 1985, p. 3).

Gebser describes *latency* as what is concealed, the demonstrable presence of the future. It includes everything that is not yet manifest as well as everything which has again returned to latency (Gebser, 1985, p. 6). This might describe Jung's collective unconscious. Gebser, however, is certain that there is no unconscious. He thinks that what depth psychologists have mistaken for the unconscious is in actuality various modalities or intensities of consciousness (Gebser, 1985, p. 290).

According to Gebser,

> The sphere is the expression of the aperspectival world. *Aperspectivity* is the *verition*, the *awaring* in truth of the whole and consequently of its spiritual manifestation, the *diaphainon*, inasmuch as the whole is perceptible only as transparency wherein origin, also containing the entire future, is the time-free present. To attain this consciously, without abandoning the *earlier* consciousness structures, is to overcome rationality in favor of *arationality*, and to break forth from mentality into diaphaneity (Gebser, 1985, p. 412).

Jaynes is disdainful of Darwin's idea of the continuity of evolution of humans from animals. He describes Darwinian evolution as,

> The idiot hierarchy of speechless apes (Jaynes, 1990, p. 9).

Jaynes does not see the first signs of human consciousness until about three thousand years ago. At that time, he says, it is as if evolution moved along and then consciousness exploded in a different direction (Jaynes, 1990, p. 9). Jaynes argues against the epiphenomenon theory of consciousness by saying that consciousness can no more modify the working mechanism of the body or its behavior than the whistle of a train directs the train. He notes when action is the most, consciousness is the least and visa versa (Jaynes, 1990, p. 11). This is a provocative point.

Prior to three thousand years ago, according to Jaynes, humans possessed a bicameral mind (Jaynes, 1990, p. 109). He says that each side of the brain is independent from the other side and that the right side is the bicameral mind (Jaynes, 1990, p. 116). The bicameral mind is the mammalian mind that served to organize intricate bicameral civilizations (Jaynes, 1990, p. 117). It is the

bicameral mind that provided evolution with the pressure to develop the left side (Jaynes, 1990, pp. 103-104). Jaynes does not equate consciousness with civilization. He finds evidence for civilization and society thousands of years predating the emergence of consciousness. In fact, he says,

> Consciousness is chiefly a cultural introduction, learned on the basis of language and taught to others (Jaynes, 1990, p. 220).

According to Jaynes, the bicameral mind contained the auditory hallucinations (voices in the head) that characterized the preconscious ancestors that made the ancient civilizations. As to the origin of auditory hallucinations, Jaynes writes,

> The most plausible hypothesis is that verbal hallucinations were a side effect of language comprehension that evolved by natural selection as a method of behavioral control (Jaynes, 1990, p. 134).

Jaynes' reading of the *Iliad* finds evidence of the bicameral mind and only a few exceptional examples that reflect consciousness or mental processes (Jaynes, 1990, p. 69: 84). He writes,

> Illiadic man did not have subjectivity, as do we: he had no awareness of his awareness of the world, no

> internal mind-space to introspect upon (Jaynes, 1990, p. 75).

For Jaynes, in the *Iliad*, the gods take the place of consciousness. They make the plans and give reasons and motives. The heroes in the *Iliad* had no egos (Jaynes, 1990, pp. 72-73). Jaynes does not propose a source of the voices of the bicameral mind beyond the idea that they are neurological commands (Jaynes, 1990, p. 99).

Jaynes claims that the breakdown of the bicameral mind occurred when the voices of the gods were weakened. The power of the voices to command was weakened when writing externalized the commands that were then easier to ignore. Travel caused a kind of tower of Babel situation. The gods had less and less to say that helped solve the real problems of their daily lives (Jaynes, 1990, pp. 208-209). Perhaps, as Jaynes says, when people met strangers who spoke strange languages and had strange customs, they projected an inner world into them, thus beginning the process of building subjectivity.

In The *Origins and History of Consciousness*, Neumann draws an analogy between the development of each person's individual psyche and the development of the whole of human consciousness. The symbol of the uroboros, the snake which eats its own tail, is the symbol for the first stage and

the last stage as well as the container for the process of individuation of the ego consciousness. Neumann interprets the many origin myths that tell the story of a Great Mother in the distant past as archetypal parallels to the experience of the preconscious individual psyche. Neumann relates uroboric consciousness to the notion of the *participation mystique* which means that human consciousness had yet to differentiate completely from the surrounding world (Neumann, 1971, p. 105).

Just as a fetus *en utero* floats without perceivable boundaries, so did early humans metaphorically *float* through their lives without perceivable boundaries (Neumann, 1971, pp. 331-332). For Neumann, the quest of ego-consciousness to separate from this uroboric universe is archetypically expressed as the quest of the hero in myth. The masculine trend towards ego consciousness inevitably leads to the development of masculine culture. This is why consciousness is always masculine (Neumann, 1971, pp. 143-144). Neumann elaborates:

> Any deeper analysis will show a picture of Western man in continuous movement and countermovement, but moving steadily in a direction fixed from the very beginning: toward the emancipation of man from nature and consciousness from unconscious (Neumann, 1971, p. 382).

The *Metaformic Theory* of Judy Grahn assumes some type of evolutionary view of the origin of humanity but Grahn does not address this angle specifically. Her explanation of the origin of human consciousness presumes a preexisting mind and body, ready for embodying consciousness. Entrainment of rhythms is the explanation Grahn gives for how consciousness became externalized. Grahn explains,

> Acquiring an externally based mind required early humans to connect physically. This was accomplished when the females evolved a menstrual cycle capable of synchronous rhythm. Entrainment is the quality of two similarly timed beats to link up and become synchronized in each other's presence (Grahn, 1994, p. 13).

Grahn supposes that the hominid ancestors hid the menstruating females (bleeding group members) in trees as a protection from blood-sniffing predators. Grahn suggests that menstrual separation and recognition of menstruant-lunar synchrony was the first step to differentiating light from darkness, and of displaying and remembering the knowledge (Grahn, 1994, p. 14).

The idea that culture is an expression of consciousness that is evolving in a direction has serious social implications. It is risky business to suggest that older cultures are more primitive or that contemporary culture is the highest expression of what has before been

ill expressed. One reason it is so risky is that there is no objective standard that can be applied to cultural complexity. In fact this same thing can be applied to the discussion of complexity in general.

The *complexity as progress* metaphor is popular among mechanical materialists and non-mechanical materialists alike. The metaphor of complexity as progress contains at least one potentially fatal flaw. That flaw is this: there is a lack of reported human experience that can verify if the human experience is so much more complex than the experience of the coalescing of a few molecules, such as a couple of hydrogen molecules united with an oxygen molecule. Until we are able to ask them and then report the response, how can we tell if our experience is superior or more durable or more intimate than that of those bonded molecules?

The evidence that is so obvious to some that human expression is the most complex has yet to be tested. Wouldn't it be just too ironic to discover that intra-molecular relationships produce an interior experience, more complex and more gratifying, than human experience? This is not my theory, but it is one of the possible theories. Without further data, such as reports of human experiences that allow us to express what it is like to be

gravity or water or light, we can only express what human beings experience.

Meaning

All meaning is culture-bound. There is no independent meaning scheme. Meaning expresses collective cultural definitions. In this dissertation I am exploring the subject of meaning and meaning-making as a process. I use the word *meaning* to express significance to humans.

According to the experientialist myth, as told by Lakoff and Johnson, meaning emerges from interaction, from constant negotiation with the environment and other people. It emerges in the following way: the nature of our bodies and our physical and cultural environment imposes a structure on our experience (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 230).

They explain,

> Metaphorical idioms are philosophically important in a number of ways. First, they show something important about meaning, namely, that words can designate portions of conventional mental images. Second, they show that mental images do not necessarily vary wildly from person to person. Instead, there are conventional mental images that are shared across a large proportion of speakers of a language. Third, they show that a significant part of cultural knowledge takes the form of conventional images and knowledge about those images. Each of us appears to have thousands of conventional images as part of our long-term memory. Fourth, they open the possibility that a significant part of the lexical differences across languages may

> have to do with differences in conventional imagery. The same metaphorical mappings applied to different images will give rise to different linguistic expressions of those mappings. Fifth, they show dramatically that the meaning of the whole is not a simple function of the meanings of the parts. Instead, the relationship between the meaning of the parts and the meaning of the whole is complex (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999, p. 69).

Darwin imparts meaning to the process of evolution itself. For him, even though natural selection is random, the progress of evolution moves from lower to higher (Darwin, p. 491).

Daniel Dennett says that real meaning, the sort of meaning our words and ideas have, is an emergent product of the originally meaningless algorithmic processes (Dennett, 1995, p. 427). His view is representative of the neo-Darwinist position on evolution, on consciousness and on the evolution of consciousness. Dennett says,

> In a single stroke, the idea of evolution by natural selection unifies the realm of life, meaning, and purpose with the realm of space and time, cause and effect, mechanism and physical law (Dennett, 1995, p. 21).

According to Metaformic Theory, meaning originally came from the story that explained a repeated behavior. The act of making a story was the act that transformed behavior into a ritual. It was an example of a blood signal. The

first instance of human meaning was the metaphor: *hidden bleeders are like dark moons*. This was the dawning of human consciousness. The group that secluded bleeding ones was successful at holding meaning (the story about the ritual) in place. Their success rested in the fact that they had erected a rule and had a way to enforce it. The rule was, *hide bleeding people*. They created a boundary between themselves and others, a boundary between consciousness and unconsciousness and a boundary of *before* and *after*. Almost immediately, the practice of hiding bleeding members of the group in trees became more contrived. They added more rules, more regulation. They also expanded the definition of bleeding members to include people who cut themselves in special circumstances (these people we now know as males).

Neumann and Jung attribute meaning to the evolution of consciousness. Neumann notes that coming to the light is central to creation myths. He writes,

> This light, the symbol of consciousness and illumination, is the prime object of the cosmogonies of all peoples. (Neumann, 1971, p. 104).

And,

> The fact that the dawn of consciousness and the creation of the world are parallel processes which

> throw up the same symbolism indicates that the world actually exists only to the degree that it is cognized by an ego. A differentiated world is the reflection of a self-differentiating consciousness (Neumann, 1971, p. 329).

All symbols and archetypes are projections of the formative side of human nature that creates order and assigns meaning. Symbols and symbolic figures are the dominants of every civilization; they are the cocoons of meaning, which humanity spins round itself. All studies and interpretations of culture are the study and interpretation of archetypes and their symbols (Neumann, 1971, p. 371).

In *Synchronicity: An Acausal Connection Principle,* Jung makes the point that if, by definition, only events that can be repeated are recognized as significant, then, by definition, irrepeatable significant coincidences, no matter how important, fall into insignificance (Jung, 1973b, p. 6). Jung says that the synchronicity principle asserts that the terms of a meaningful coincidence are connected by simultaneity and meaning. Jung acknowledges that, while meaning is an anthropomorphic interpretation, it is still an indispensable criterion of synchronicity even though what that meaning is may be unknowable (Jung, 1973b, p. 69).

There is no definitive evidence that the moon and menstruation are linked. There is determinative evidence that people all over the world from the earliest times believe such a connection to be true. There is *psychological* truth to the connection (Shuttle & Redgrove, 1988, p. 145).

The phenomenon of entrainment between the moon and the practice of hiding bleeders may have been a synchrony whose meaning is yet to be understood.

Meaning is less elusive to Gebser. As a monist, he finds meaning in the whole,

> Nothing exists for its own sake; it exists for the sake of the whole (Gebser, 1985, p. 541).

Edgar Morin is someone whose thinking goes beyond the intuition of a "whole". His complexity theory found both the Absolute of Hegelian Idealism and Marxist Materialism inadequate to explain his world of twentieth-century France. Morin shares with Hegel and Marx the idea that material conditions are related to ideology. Unlike Hegel and Marx--both of whom concentrated on the contradiction between opposites to explain the energizing force of historical movement--Morin describes the relationship between all disparate things as *recursive*. For Morin,

recursivity explains the energy that drives humanity. Morin does not posit any version of a directed evolution. Morin emphasizes the embedded nature of all reality. Meaning is made in the fertile relationships between all parts of everything, everywhere.

Metaformic Theory

Chaos is often described in origin stories as the time before the beginning of time or space. Judy Grahn interprets cross-cultural origin stories in her book, *Blood Bread and Roses: How Menstruation Created the World* (1994) as recalling pre-conscious times. Chaos was the time before there was any consciousness of any separations between the foreground and the background, or between the individual and the surroundings. Chaos is a world in which there is no differentiation between self and other. Chaos is the world without human meaning. The first ideas of our ancestors that were not lost to animal chaos are, according to Grahn, metaforms. A metaform is an act or form of instruction that makes a connection between menstruation and a mental principle or a physical embodiment of metaphor of which one part of is menstrual. The original metaform was the embodiement of the metaphor that mediated the relationship between the moon's cycle and the act of separating girls from the group. Grahn's basic premise is that all metaphor,

all measurement, and all cultural forms,' could they be traced back far enough, would lead us to menstruation and menstrual rite (Grahn, 1994, p. 20).

The reason menstrual blood plays such a prominent role in archaic origin stories is that all of human consciousness can be traced to ancestors who actualized the original metaphor that became the building block of consciousness. Grahn says that these hominid ancestors hid their menstruating females in trees to save the group from predators in synchrony with the moon. They noticed the connection between hiding females and the moon's cycles. They understood a metaphor: women are hidden like moons are hidden.

Grahn's theory explains the widespread belief that the most potent substance in the world is menstrual blood. It is potent enough to structure our life experience in a way that is different than how it is experienced with animal consciousness, which has no equivalent menstrual instruction.

Grahn is applying metaformic logic when she says (poetically) that *all rituals are menstrual rituals* and *all blood is menstrual blood* (Grahn, 1994).

Grahn puts it this way,

> Neither instinct nor the central nervous system can store metaformic imagery, without which--in the absence of culture--there is only animal mind, chaos (Grahn, 1994, pp. 19-20).

Grahn defines four types of metaforms:

> Wilderness metaforms use creatures, formations, and elements of nature to describe menstrual ideas.
>
> Cosmetic metaforms order the world through descriptive use of human body action, artful movement, shape, ornament and decoration, even the ingesting of meaningful foods.
>
> Narrative metaforms use language, sound, number and story.
>
> Material metaforms are characterized by the separation of spirit from matter and the use of material to craft products into forms that express cultural ideas (Grahn, 1994, pp. 22-23).

The limitations of metaformic theory might be that the theory is limited to the origin of human consciousness. It does not yet speak directly to the origin of consciousness itself or the primal origin. Also it does not explain how the evolutionary process operates in all its aspects. Metaforms share much in common with memes. Metaforms, however, unlike memes, do not appear out of nowhere; they are constructed through ritual. Ritual is also the mechanism through which metaforms replicate and mutate. Metaforms may also share many things in common with Jungian

archetypes. One possible interpretation is that ritual, possibly in concert with the heaven's closest body, the moon. Of course, this is only a wild speculation on my part and cannot be blamed on Grahn or Jung. As to the bicameral mind theory, metaformic theory could fit snugly into this idea thusly. The voices of the bicameral mind may have been activated, not by repetitious work, as Jaynes suggests, but by repetitious rituals. These voices may be the voices of the archetypes. If Grahn's entrainment theory were to be applied to the quickening of the bicameral mind, then, the breakdown of that mind might be read as a breakdown of wilderness metaforms.

Metaphor

One way to think about the way metaphors might work as an aid to consciousness is to compare the obvious similarities and differences between animal consciousness and human consciousness. Any pet lover will testify to the range of abilities and emotions observed in the animals we live with, yet, there remains a vast difference in the way humans experience life and the way animals do. One difference between the consciousness of pets and of humans is the ability to compare one thing to another thing or to make metaphors. Animals do not seem to be capable of making the comparison between unalike things. It appears that

only the human animal looks into a mirror and recognizes their own reflection. This is because humans have the ability to use metaphor to connect two different things, in this case, a body and a reflection of a body. A metaphor is the container that holds the thought, *I am my reflection*. Although some primates can communicate with people by using signals, so far, they do not seem to have access to abstract thinking. Humans do.

In Metaphors We Live By and *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought*, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson--from the perspective of cognitive science--find a close relationship between ritual and metaphor. They argue that the mind is inherently embodied. Thought is mostly unconscious. Abstract concepts are largely metaphorical. Taken together these findings of cognitive science beg the basic questions of philosophy that are answered by their idea of an *experientialist* alternative to objective or subjective truth. They consider that aspect of ritual that is transformative. There can be no culture without ritual. Ritual forms an indispensable part of the experiential basis for our cultural metaphorical systems (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 234). They say:

> We suggest that the metaphors we live by, whether cultural or personal, are partially preserved in ritual. Meaning is never disembodied or objective and is always grounded in the acquisition and use of a conceptual system. Moreover, truth is always given relative to a conceptual system and the metaphors that structure it. Truth is therefore not absolute or objective but is based on understanding (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 197).

Lakoff and Johnson say that there is no Kantian autonomous person with absolute freedom and a transcendent reason and morality: there is no Cartesian dualistic person. There is no utilitarian person who lives by making one practical decisions after another because most thought is unconscious. There is no phenomenological person because we have no direct access to our unconscious mind. There is no poststructuralist person for whom all is arbitrary and meaningless (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999, p. 5). What there is is embodied experience known to us though metaphor. They write,

> Metaphorical thought is the principal tool that makes philosophical insight possible and that constrains the forms that philosophy can take (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999, p. 7).

According to the authors,

> Primary metaphors are like atoms that can be put together to form molecules. A great many of these complex molecular metaphors are stable--conventionalized, entrenched, fixed for long periods of time. They form a huge part of our conceptual system and affect how we think and what we care about

> almost every waking moment. Beyond that, they structure our dreams (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999, p. 60).

> Primary metaphors are realized in the brain physically and most are sub conscious. Primary metaphors provide an inferential structure to subjective experience (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999, p. 59).

For Lakoff and Johnson, the findings of cognitive science challenge the foundations of western philosophy. They write:

> We can never go back to *a priori* philosophizing about mind and language...Given our new understanding of the mind, the question of what a human being is arises for us anew in the most urgent way... Metaphorical thought is the principal tool that makes philosophical insight possible and that constrain the forms that philosophy can take (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999, p. 7).

Metaphors have material and philosophical consequences (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999, p. 63). Cognitive science and neuroscience suggest that the world as we know it contains no primary qualities in Locke's sense, because the qualities of things as we can experience and comprehend them depend crucially on our neural makeup, our bodily interactions with them, and our purposes and interests. For real human beings, the only realism is an embodied realism (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999, p. 26).

From the experientialist perspective of the authors, metaphor is a matter of imaginative rationality. Metaphors

permit an understanding of one kind of experience in terms of another. This creates coherence by virtue of imposing gestalts that are structured by natural dimensions of experience. Metaphors are powerful. They write,

> New metaphors are capable of creating new understandings and therefore, new realities...But metaphor is not merely a matter of language. It is a matter of conceptual structure. And conceptual structure is not merely a matter of the intellect--it involves all the natural dimensions of our experience, including aspects of our sense experiences: color, shape, texture, sound, etc. (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 235).

Lakoff and Johnson denounce the Literal Meaning Theory found in the western philosophical tradition. That theory is the one that has defined meaningfulness, reason, and truth so as to exclude metaphor and other aspects of imaginative *rationality* for the last twenty-five hundred years. In doing so, it claims that metaphor plays no role in the serious matters of life: it can at best serve as ornamentation or perhaps play a role in irrational persuasion (Lakoff & Turner, 1980, p. 215). They write,

> Metaphor resides in thought: not just in words (Lakoff & Turner, 1980, p. 2).

These authors have done more than simply redefine the meaning of *metaphor*. They have reconceptualized metaphors

beyond the narrow descriptors as special, poetic language. They show that to limit our understanding of metaphors to a linguistic expression is to miss the role of metaphor creation that underlies the linguistic expressions (Lakoff & Turner, 1980, pp. 136-138).

Metaphors are conceptual mappings (Lakoff & Turner, 1980, p. 138).

Lakoff and Turner argue that metaphor is a conceptual matter, often unconscious, and that conceptual metaphors underlie everyday language as well as poetic language (Lakoff & Turner, 1980, p. 136).

And,

> It [metaphor] is central to our understanding of our selves, our culture, and the world at large (Lakoff & Turner, 1980, p. 214)…
>
> To study metaphor is to be confronted with hidden aspects of one's own mind and one's own culture. To understand poetic metaphor, one must understand conventional metaphor. To do so is to discover that one has a worldview, that one's imagination is constrained, and that metaphor plays an enormous role in shaping one's everyday understanding of everyday events. That is an important part of the power of poetic metaphor: it calls upon our deepest modes of everyday understanding and forces us to use them in new ways. It is vital that we understand our own worldviews and the processes that guide our everyday understanding and our imagination (Lakoff & Turner, 1980, p. 214).

Jaynes breaks consciousness down to its role in structuring metaphors. It is by metaphor that consciousness grows (Jaynes, 1990, p. 48). Jaynes points out that understanding is coming to a metaphor. This is why it is so hard to understand consciousness, because there is nothing that it is like in our experience (Jaynes, 1990, pp. 52-53). For Jaynes,

> The subjective conscious mind is an analog of what is called the real world. It is built up with a vocabulary or lexical field whose terms are all metaphors or analogs of behavior in the physical world. Its reality is of the same order as mathematics. It allows us to shortcut behavioral processes and arrive at more adequate decisions. Like mathematics, it is an operation rather than a thing or repository. And it is intimately bound up with volition and decision (Jaynes, 1990, p. 55).

Since consciousness is an analog for the behavior of seeing, and since *seeing* is limited, consciousness is limited (Jaynes, 1990, p. 61).

Grahn, like Jaynes, and Lakoff and Johnson, stresses the relationship between thinking and metaphors:

> We now think in metaphors, and we think *with* metaphors, as molds into which we pour the stuff of everyday experience. But we get these metaphoric molds, these meta'forms', not from blind imagination, but from our very specific and historic interactions with the external and internal physical world, remembered through rites and ceremonies handed down to us--by now, through dozens of channels. The original metaforms were set in place millions of years before humans had speech, and they were based on the

> synchrony inherent in the menstrual cycle, as well as in the ability of the primate mind to think in terms of mimicry and metaphor (Grahn, 1994, p. 21).

Unlike Jaynes, Grahn puts ritual first and language second. Grahn writes:

> Metaphor itself is a form of synchrony, measuring the inner with the outer. Metaphor says that one thing is another: it says they are entrained through repetition of pattern. Metaphor measures through comparison. The recognition of similarity and dissimilarity of category between elements is how we think, and the external expression of this recognition is what makes us human. The transformation of such an idea into a metaform, an external expression of the synchronization of two patterns, is what enables human communication. Metaforms transform one thing into another, endowing two unlike things with equality of power, in our minds (Grahn, 1994, p. 21).

Where Jaynes imagines that the original metaphor of non-bicameral consciousness is the difference between the two minds and Lakoff and Johnson imagine that metaphors take their life and their truth from their relationship to the human body, Grahn posits that actions are required to hold metaphors in place. She writes:

> We have constructed our minds externally, not abstractly, but through using physical metaphors--metaforms--that embody a comparison to a menstruation based idea (Grahn, 1994, p. 22).

For Grahn, spirituality is an example of metaformic construction. She explains,

> Metaforms are physical, mental, and also spiritual. By spirit I mean that metaforms at times *speak* to us in some fashion, and people understand this communication as a dialogue with a non-human intelligent spirit, or deity, as messages from the mind of the cosmos. Non materialist peoples have had terms that come in all three spheres, for example the Maori word *aria*, meaning a spirit that enters--say, a snake--and conveys a message to humans. The *Bible* and other mythology refer to speaking huts, walls, and thrones: rocks, plants, and animals speak to tribal and psychic folk and psychiatrists work with the divinatory nature of dreams, whose images speak to us of our deepest comprehension of life. My contention is that the central unit of measurement, the ultimate metaphor, to which all metaforms refer, is blood (Grahn, 1994, p. 22).

Myth

I am interested in how ritual and myth are related. There is no consensus on this matter. For some, myth came first and the ritual followed as an enactment of the story. For others, ritual was first and then myths were created to explain them. Metaformic Theory assumes that the ritual preceded the myth.

For Edmund Leach in *Culture and Communication: The logic by which symbols are connected: an introduction to the use of structuralist analysis in social anthropology,* the most important point is that ritual is inseparable from

myth. Both ritual and myth are modes of making statements about structural relationships (1954: 264).

In *The Origins and History of Consciousness*, Erich Neumann writes:

> We know that in all probability a ritual, i.e., some ceremony or course of action, always precedes the formulation of the myth, and it is obvious that action must come before knowledge, the unconscious deed before the spoken content (Neumann, 1971, p. 104).

For Grahn, myth is a form of factual story when the myth is taken in the context of the culture that is telling the story (Grahn, 1994, p. 4). The myths are the meaning. Grahn explains that this is why so many origin stories can be traced to stories that describe red flowing objects, like a red snake, or a river or a red ant hill that looks like flowing blood. She shows that another common feature of many origin stories is sacred trees or woods. If hiding bleeding members in trees was the original ritual then these stories are *truths* when they are interpreted metaphorically. The objects that were associated with bleeding or trees became sacred based on these associations. Christian culture is an example of a culture with an origin story full of images related to menstruation but without any visible signs of it. The Garden of Eden story has a snake (a metaformic representation of

menstruation), in a tree (a metaformic representation of hiding bleeding members), just to mention two such examples of which there are many more.

David Macleagan makes an important point about how myth is related to metaphor. He says:

> Myth, in its deep structure as well as in its superficial content, is about this compound relation between body/mind and word/world. It is metaphoric, not in the sense that it uses what we call *figures of speech*, mere rhetorical devices, but in the root sense of the word: *carrying across* the convenient boundaries we establish between sexes, seasons, species and stars. This metaphoric leakage is not consciously contrived, nor is it peculiar to myth; it penetrates, in the act, *everything* we do, all sense we make--even in the most narrowly specialized branch of science (Maclagan, 1967)

Richard Leaky says that every human society has an origin myth (Leakey, 1994, p. 156).

Philosopher Charlene Spretnak says about myth, "It is a communion with the deepest truths of existence" (Spretnak, 1997, p. 182).

Patriarchy

Public or simply social authority always belongs to men
Levi-Strauss

In this dissertation I use this word to describe western civilization since the beginning of the so-called Axial age in Classical Greece along with the deep structure

of western civilization. I use the term to cover the institutions of the fathers, not necessarily the fathers themselves. The structures of patriarchy hold men and women alike in its grip and it is the structures of patriarchy that I am most interested in.

The western philosophical tradition begins with the Classical Greeks. Patriarchy had a heyday in the city-state of the *polis*. Until one night when they all mysteriously disappeared, the most common image in Classical Athens was the erect penis, an apt image for patriarchy (Keuls, 1985). Men wore their togas open, exposing their genitals and Plato waxed on about the perfect beauty to be found in the body of boys (Plato, 1980). This esthetic came with the dawning of a new age that replaced the more female oriented cultures where the comparable image was of a maiden.

(Later in this dissertation, I will report stories of female genitalia. I will explore the potential meaning of public displays of genitals.)

In Plato's *Meno*, Socrates explains that knowledge lies in the male domain. Meaning for Plato is rooted in the realm of the Ideas. Women do not even have access to this realm (99d). In one place Socrates says that knowledge is a divine dispensation meted out to men, it can be neither learned nor acquired, it is remembered (100). In a

different place he says he learned from Diotima, a woman (201d-212b).

Herodotus is the *Father of history*. This history is the story of patriarchy. In the last hundred years or so, there has been a trend that treats the story of patriarchy as the story of males' reaction to the dominating and oppressive Great Mother.

Like Jung and Neumann, Gebser says that perspectival consciousness is basically male and patriarchy is the embodiment of the wakeful principle that was expressed in Classical Greece via the mutation to the mental structure (Gebser, 1985, p. 79). Also like Neumann and Jung, Gebser contrasts Bachofen's image of pre-patriarchal, matriarchy with the subsequent rise of patriarchy to make his point (Neumann, 1971, p. 105). He writes,

> It is almost as though the material-crazed man of today were the ultimate victim of the avenging mother-- that *mater* whose chaotic immoderation is the driving force behind matter and materialistic supremacy. Besides, a world in which only the man or the father (or his representative, the son) has status and worth is ultimately inhuman (Gebser, 1985, p. 150).

For Neumann, the unconscious is dark and feminine as compared to consciousness that is light and male. Neumann expands on the work of Bachofen, who identified a matriarchal stage of culture. Neumann understands this

stage to be representative of the stage when ego consciousness is undeveloped and still embedded in nature and the world (Neumann, 1971, p. 42).

Neumann relates the deflation of the unconscious to the depreciation of the female in patriarchy. Consciousness moves away from unconsciousness. This trend towards patriarchal consciousness is reflected in the supersession of the feminine moon myths by the masculine sun myths and can be traced far back into primitive psychology (Neumann, 1971, p. 340ff).

Neumann makes the point that the Feminine as a totality projects space. It follows from her character of containing vessel and cosmic egg. He goes on to say that,

> Since she governs growth, the Great Mother is goddess of time. That is why she is a moon goddess, for moon and night sky are the visible manifestations of the temporal process in the cosmos, and the moon, not the sun, is the true chronometer of the primordial era. From menstruation, with its supposed relation to the moon, pregnancy, and beyond, the woman is regulated by and dependent on time: so it is she who determines time--to a far greater extent than the male, with his tendency toward the conquest of time, toward timelessness and eternity. And this temporal quality of the Feminine is bound up with the moon. The temporal quality as well as the element of water are to be correlated with the Feminine, and this connection is made plain in the symbol *stream of consciousness* (Neumann, 1974, pp. 226-227).

When I use the term *patriarchy* I usually refer to the structure of western civilization based on the power of the father over the mother and children.

Ritual

The definitions of *ritual* vary widely: so do their occurrences. Not everyone agrees on the definition or the significance of rituals. The occurrences of rituals are so varied and widespread that it is unlikely that one definition would fit every case (Lincoln, 1981, p. 3).

The roots of the word *ritual* are from the Sanskrit *r'tu* meaning any act of magic with a purpose or just *menstruation*. *Rita* means a proper course and *ri* means birth--it is also the root of the word red, arithmetic and rhythm (Grahn, 1994, pp. 5-6).

In this inquiry I am using Grahn's metaformic theory to study a certain ritual. Therefore, I use it to discuss rituals in general. The original menstrual practice was transformed into a ritual when human ancestors became conscious of the fact that hiding bleeding members was related to hiding moons; this was the primary instance of human or abstract consciousness. Before the menstrual behaviors became menstrual rituals the hominid, proto-humans were conscious, but they were not yet human. Ritual set the course for humanity.

Stories come from rituals; ritual precedes myth. The myths are stories that explain the meaning of the rituals (Grahn, 1999, p. 172). The gestures of rituals remain the same, meanings do not (Grahn, 1999, p. 158).

Originally, ritual was the content and structure of the myth. Meaning is held in place through repeated rituals. The early humans used rituals to hold the experience in place until myths could develop. The meaning was understood because the connection between the hidden menstruating group members and the hidden moon was established as the original truth.

This truth preceded any truths about the meaning of anatomy. There was no consciousness of gender because there were no genders yet (or none whose evidence remains). There were members who were secluded when they bled. Soon there were those who bled--who menstruated-- by cutting themselves (often their genitals) in imitation of menstruation. Circumcision is a ceremonial cutting of the penis that survives in contemporary culture. Circumcision is a bleeding ritual. The boy's blood carries the story of what makes us humans. The rituals communicate. The boy's blood *communicates* the myth of the covenant between Jehovah and the Israelites (Genesis 15:1). Before that, the same action of circumcision (the most common male puberty rite

among preliterate people) carried a different message. The message is that males have sacred blood and that spilling sacred blood makes the *man* (Delaney, Lupton & Toth, 1988, p. 223) (Bettelheim, 1954, p. 137).

Psychoanalytically speaking, the blood-sacrifice is tied to menstruation. The *Thesmophoria* is a menstrual ritual documented from the classical period of ancient Greece. At that time (circa 450 B.C.E.), it was a very old, pre- Greek ritual. Votive remains suggest that the origins of the *Thesmophoria* date from 6000B.C.E. All women who were bleeding could participate. When women wanted to start their period for the ceremony, they drank tea made of the Lygos plant to bring on their menses (Meador 1986). All of the women were separated from the community. They were sacred. They wore red armbands. They were untouchable. On the first day of the ceremony, the women worshipers sacrificed suckling pigs --called *moon-animals*-- to the deity, Snake (Meador 1986).

Ritual is the means of mediating between what is sacred and what is profane (Eliade, 1971, p. 5). Eliade refers to the general behavior of what he calls *archaic man* when he says that objects or acts acquire a value, and in doing so become real, because they participate in a *reality that transcends them*. He says that the meaning and value of

human acts are not connected with their crude physical datum but with their property of reproducing a primordial act--of repeating a mythical example (Eliade, 1971, p. 4).

The reality that transcends them is ritual. In the act of repeating learned gestures the crude products of nature become objects fashioned by human industry. They acquire their reality: they acquire their identity, only to the extent of their participation in a transcendent reality. The gesture acquires meaning--it is reality-- solely to the extent to which it repeats a primordial act (Eliade, 1971, p. 5).

Through the paradox of rite, every consecrated site coincides with the center of the world. The paradox is that even though rituals are performed in the present, they are repeating a ritual from the past. Every time a ritual occurs it coincides with the mythical time of the *beginning*. Through repetition of the cosmogonic act, concrete time, in which the construction takes place, is projected into mythical time, *in illo tempore* when the foundation of the world occured (Eliade, 1971 p. 20).

The primordial act that Eliade is talking about is identifiable in myths. Sacred stories document the primordial act. Eliade is famous for positing the idea that every time a ritual is enacted it is always a reenactment

of an earlier ritual. Through the paradox of rite, every consecrated space coincides with the center of the world, just as the time of any ritual coincides with the mythical time of the *beginning* (Eliade, 1971, p. 20). I will return to this point in Chapter Six.

According to Eliade, for preliterate *man*, the outstanding reality is the sacred. The innumerable gestures of consecration--of tracts and territories, of objects, of people etc.--reveal the *primitive's* obsession with the real, the human thirst for *Being* (Eliade, 1971, p. 11). Reality is defined through ritual. Being itself *becomes* through ritual.

The anthropologist Bruce Lincoln, author of *Emerging from the Chrysalis: Studies in Rituals of Women's Initiation,* studies five varied female initiation rituals in the tradition of Mircea Eliade. According to Lincoln, the existence of ritual is a constant in human society--a true cultural universal (Lincoln, 1981, p. 2).

Lincoln defines ritual as a coherent set of symbolic actions that has a real, transformative effect on individuals and social groups (Lincoln, 1981, p. 6). Lincoln studied female initiation rituals in order to make conclusions about rituals in general. Lincoln claims that the way in which women's initiation ceremonies are used to

constitute and transform the cosmos is the basis of all ritual (Lincoln, 1981, p. 6).

Ritual is a regulating mechanism for the local economy and ecology. Lincoln says:

> [Ritual] is the effervescence that shatters the quietude of the everyday world (Lincoln, 1981, p. 2).

For Lincoln, like Eliade, ritual annihilates historical time. Rituals are marked by

> an elaborate symbolism, and are invested with a significance that transcends their strictly physical importance. They are the regulated symbolic expressions of certain sentiments (Lincoln, 1981, p. 2).

Chris Knight makes the point that perhaps ritual is looked down on in contemporary times because it is perceived that rituals are group activities and the west favors individualistic pursuits (Knight, 1991). Perhaps it is because the definition of ritual has been reduced to referring to what we do not do anymore except in church or on special occasions like weddings or funerals.

Mary Douglas is best known for her investigations of pollution (1966, 1972) and of body symbolism (1968, 1970). She says that the form of ritual is important because it is

the mechanism for synchronizing collective behavior (Douglas 1982: 38).

Chris Knight built on Durkheim's idea (1963) that women used blood in a ritualistic way to repulse male sexual advances. Knight imagines that women used ritual as an organizing tool to convince the men to bring home the meat from the kill through the use of the sex strike (Knight, 1991, p. 122). Knight writes, "Human culture is based on solidarity" (Knight, 1991, p. 126). Specifically, he means gender solidarity. Knight sees that females took advantage of their naturally occurring menstrual synchrony with the moon to opportunistically elaborate artistic devices aimed at enforcing the *hunter's own kill* taboo by instigating actions that eventually became the ritual domain--human culture (Knight, 1991, p. 255). Knight puts the taboo, or the story, or the myth first, then the ritual.

In *Structural Anthropology*, Claude Levi-Strauss, the structuralist anthropologist, dismisses the co-constitutive role of ritual and myth. He denies any correspondence between the two. Instead, he says that ritual and myth have a dialectical relationship that shows evidence that the relationship is structural. He shows this by comparing the rituals within a local area where there are competing myths

of competing groups (Levi-Strauss, 1963, p. 240). Structural anthropology is driven by the idea that the fundamental building blocks of culture are the exogamy taboos.

About myth, he says that if there is any meaning at all, it is in the structure of the myth and the relationship between the parts (Levi-Strauss, 1963, p. 210). Eventually structural analysis leads him to deduce that the underlying condition of the social order is the subjugation of the women (Levi-Strauss, 1963, p. 362). This is one way of describing the fact that in so many of the oldest known rituals, menstruating women are subjected to so much ritualistic attention, much of which seems like torture. Structural anthropological analysis is not subtle enough to be able to account for the paradoxical nature of power and danger that surround menstrual practices.

Neumann explains the relationship between symbols and ritual. Neumann connects the oldest female mysteries with everyday life and the male mysteries with abstract, spiritual space (Neumann, 1974, p. 282).

> At first everything is under the unconscious emotional compulsion of the symbols which appear in the ritual, whose aim it is to represent and enact them. In the old coronation rites, for example, symbol and ritual are still wholly identical with the exemplary life of the king. Later the ritual takes the form of a sacred action that is played by the collective for the

> collective, though it is still invested with all the force of magic and ritual efficacy (Neumann, 1971, p. 372).

Neumann traces rituals to the Mesolithic stage. He says that the earliest rituals were enacted in secret male societies that arose in opposition to the female-dominated society that introduced agriculture (Neumann, 1971, p. 430).

> The spiritual collective as we find it in all initiations and all secret societies, sects, mysteries, and religions is essentially masculine and, despite its communal character, essentially individual in the sense that each man is initiated as an individual and undergoes a unique experience that stamps his individuality (Neumann, 1971, p. 146).

Neumann notes that Briffault's view is that most mysteries were originally feminine and only later adopted by men and correlates this with the position of women in western society (Neumann, 1971, p. 340ff). Writing about women, Neumann identifies menstruation, pregnancy, and lactation as reasons that women have a more vegetive nature than men, in the past and today. He identifies the natural rhythm between women and agriculture and the fact that the females and children huddle around the hearth as factors that strengthen their *participation mystique*. Neumann writes,

> All these factors reinforce the submergence in the unconscious, which is a characteristic feature of the female group (Neumann, 1971, pp. 138-139).

Neumann interprets male initiation rites as the expression of the activated collective unconscious, which is now linked to the community, since, in these rites, the archetypal canon is handed down as the spiritual world of the collective by the elders who represent *heaven* (Neumann, 1971, p. 408). He explains why he describes civilization as masculine,

> In prepatriarchal conditions the men and the elders stand for *heaven*, and they transmit the collective cultural heritage of their day and generation. The fathers are the representatives of law and order, from the earliest taboos to the most modern juridical systems: they hand down the highest values of civilization, whereas the mother controls the highest, deepest, values of life and nature (Neumann, 1971, pp. 172-173).

My working definition of ritual is a practice that has the effect of transforming some thing that has no meaning into a thing that is meaningful. Ritual is a necessary and foundational aspect of human culture. Rituals are repeated gestures or behaviors. Rituals can be visible and invisible, conscious or unconscious. Some rituals are performed with awareness: others are unconscious. Sometimes rituals are considered to be enactments of taboos or

defining rules. It is interesting to note that the three words, *taboo*, *ritual* and *rule* all have menstrual origins (*Blood Magic*, 1988, p. 7) (Shuttle & Redgrove, 1988, p. 63).

For human beings, the only realism is an embodied realism (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999, p. 26). They write,

> Each ritual is a repeated, coherently structured, and unified aspect of our experience. In performing them, we give structure and significance to our activities, minimizing chaos and disparity in our actions. In our terms, a ritual is one kind of experiential gestalt. It is a coherent sequence of actions, structured in terms of natural dimensions of our experience. Religious rituals are typically metaphorical kinds of activities, which usually involve metonymies--real-world objects standing for entities in the world as defined by the conceptual system of the religion. The coherent structure of the ritual is commonly taken as paralleling some aspect of reality as it is seen through the religion (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, pp. 233-234).

Sacred People, Sacred Things and Sacred Places

As I discussed in the section on *ritual*, ritual is the means of mediating between sacred and profane (Hubert & Mauss, 1964 p. 97). In cultures that do not separate between religion and secular life (as happens in many western cultures, human existence is a series of rituals in which meaning is made directly through the daily actions of the people. Seen from a distance (cross-culturally), carpenters are erecting structures; cooks are preparing

food for offerings (to be eaten later as meals), the weaver is weaving cloth for the ceremonies, like an alter cloth, or a table cloth; and the potter is throwing pots to be carried in the procession. It is difficult to distinguish the cooking for ritual purposes, such as feeding the gods and goddess, and cooking for the secular purpose of feeding the family (Eliade, 1959 p. 102). In both cases the family gets fed the *correct* food, prepared in the *correct* way. Many of the rituals look similar. The families put all the food on a special platform covered with a special cloth made for that purpose. In one set of rituals, the food is made *sacred* and in the other, western-type ritual, the food preparation and service is secular activity. The difference between the two cultures lies less in the actions (many of which they share) but in the stories that are told about the actions. The actions are the same, but the origin myths are different. The difference between the *sacred* food and the *secular* food is a matter of mythology. One mythology teaches that the family recipes are sacred texts transcribed from the gods and the western-type mythology teaches that most of the family dinner recipes are matters of nutrition and dietary concerns. Even in western traditions there are examples of *special* meals of Thanksgiving, and *soul* food.

The difference between the sacred and the profane is the difference in the stories about the rituals that enact the story being told.

A different way to think about what is sacred and what is not sacred is to think about what is *human* and what is not *human*. In foundational (so-called primitive, archaic or indigenous) cultures, religious credos guided carpenters to build, chefs to cook, potters to throw and weavers to weave. In these cultures, these activities were rituals done for religious purposes. The rituals defined the group as special (sacred) as compared to other groups. The architectural plans, the dinner recipes, the potter's patterns and the design of the cloth were what defined the special (sacred) qualities of the group.

In this dissertation I am using *sacred* in an anthropomorphic way. Sacred people, sacred things and sacred places are those people, things and places that are transformed by human activity and explained by a myth.

In this chapter I have introduced some of the ideas about subjects that I address in this study. In the next chapter I introduce the women who practiced menstrual extraction.

Taboo and Pollution

Mary Douglas is an anthropologist who bases her theories on the role of pollution in culture building. In

her book, *In the Active Voice*, she says that ritual is essential to culture, she writes:

> It [ritual] is form but inseparable from content, or rather there could be no content without it. It is appearance, but there is no other reality (Douglas, 1982, p. 36).

Douglas reports that in many cultures, the body is a metaphor for society. Douglas says that there is a strong correlation between how people see their bodies and how they see their society. The rituals the people practice with their bodies serve the needs of the group, not just the individual. She elaborates:

> Societies, like other bounded groups, are vulnerable at their intersection with other groups. Thus much attention is paid in many societies to the orifices of the human body, for here matter passes from outside to inside and vise versa. Societies which deem it important to maintain their separateness will also guard their (cultural boundaries, against intrusion and pollution...and this may be symbolized through taboos on food and sex [rituals] (Douglas 1984).

The menstrual taboos put the menstruant into a *marginal* condition between her ritual rebirth and her ritual death (Douglas, 1966).

Douglas proposes that the cultural coding of a substance as a pollutant is solely based in a shared perception of that substance as anomalous. Pollutants are

coded as *dirt*, or symbolic matter *out of place*. Pollutants (the most powerful of which is often menstrual blood) are equally a product of a specific symbolic order and a danger to the order. Typically, pollutants are accompanied by prohibitions (taboos) that intend to protect the social order from disruptive forces symbolized by the culturally defined anomalous substances (Douglas, 1966).

Menstrual rites are thick with taboos about pollution. Menstrual blood is considered a pollutant by many cultures, including many western cultures. According to metaformic theory, it was the fear and awe of the power of the menstrual blood that drove the development of menstrual rituals, not the hatred or fear of women by males or the passivity of females unable to resist male demands.

Neumann, like Robert Briffault (1927) agrees that

> All taboos originated in the menstruation taboo that the women imposed on themselves and the men (Neumann, 1974, p. 290).

Emile Durkheim's goal was to explain how exogamy--the rule of marrying outside the group--was enforced against the animal desire to marry a person from one's own group. He believed that menstruation was a tool used by women to periodically repulse men by making the blood taboo through ritualistic practices. Durkheim defines taboo as the

ritualistic setting that is a part of the sacred (Durkheim, 1963, pp. 71-72). The women were set apart in rituals. This is how the rules were enforced. According to his theory, this is the basis for society as we know it today.

Metaformic Theory says that changing menstrual practices can herald a cultural change. Certainly the most significant example of this is the case of the original entrainment between the bleeding members of the group and the moon. A second example of this is the story of Saint Thomas who went to the east coast of India to establish a Christian church. According to the Syrian Christians, this happened in 52 A. D. (Grahn 1999, 98). Reportedly his first act was to forbid any of the indigenous celebratory menstrual rituals and replace them with the Christian ritual of hiding menstruation (Grahn, 1999). A third example of menstrual rituals as harbingers of cultural change may be the observable changes that happened in the nineteen-sixties and nineteen-seventies when the taboo against hiding menstruation was broken in the United States.

Knight argues that the earliest humans put solidarity first (Knight, 1991, p. 21). Knight's thesis is that in order for hominids to evolve into humanity it was necessary to have some sort of revolution. He envisions the overthrow

of Capital by the Proletariat -- which he interprets as the overthrow of Primate Male Dominance by Female Reproductive Labour (Knight, 1991, p. 24). Knight relies on the evidence of the almost worldwide taboo among very old cultures to restrict hunters from eating their own kill (Knight, 1991, pp. 30-31) to make the point that the origin of culture lies in the sex strike of women who demanded meat for sex (Knight, 1991, p. 25). Knight recognizes that menstruation had been culturally constructed as the symbolic source of ritual power which men were motivated to copy (Knight, 1991, p. 37).

Knight writes:

> Perhaps the best starting point in attempting to define ritual is to think of it as the collective dimension of intimate, emotionally significant life. It is to think of it as the collective action at those points where this reaches deep into personal, sexual and intimate emotional experience. Hence sexual intercourse is not necessarily a ritual, but if it occurs during a preordained honeymoon following a public marriage ceremony it is. A young woman's first menstruation is not a ritual, but her puberty ceremony makes it so. To eat food is not ritual, but to participate in a public feast is. What turns even the most intimate and physiological of personal experiences into ritual is symbolic behavior, which makes it collectively acknowledged, sanctioned and controlled. And with collective control comes power (Knight, 1991, p. 80).

For Knight, ritual is inseparable from myth. Ritual and myth are modes of making statements about structural

relationships. Ritual synchronizes collective behavior through its form. The individualistic assumptions of western cultures make rituals appear to be contrived and irrelevant. Rituals are seen as obstructions to individual self-expression. Knight agrees with other scholars who see myths as scripts for ritual performances. True myth may be defined as the reduction to narrative shorthand of ritual mime performed on public festivals (Knight, 1991, p. 81). Knight emphasizes the foundational role of ritual in the creation of culture. He writes:

> Ritual is collective symbolic action, which in the most powerful way organizes and harmonizes emotions. Without this, there could have been no early human language, no kinship, and no culture. A society which was a mere assemblage of egotistic, competing individuals would have no ritual domain and could not have one (Knight, 1991, p. 80).

Knight stresses the importance of ritual for each person to try to synchronize her or his behavior with that of others (Knight, 1991, p. 80).

The form of ritual is important because it is the mechanism for synchronizing collective behavior. Western culture's stress on individualism helps explain the poverty of our rituals, their unconnectedness with each other and with our social purposes. It also explains the current impossibility of our having again a system of public ritual

relating our experiences into some kind of cosmic unity. In general, it can be said that societies or groups value ritual to the extent that they value the maintenance of collective solidarity, and disregard it to the extent that individualism becomes the dominant ethic (Knight, 1991, p. 81).

Growing up in the secular part of Los Angeles, California, I understood rituals to be empty gestures of out-dated religions. I learned the scientific explanation that *primitives* and *others* used rituals to express their consciousness, their truth; we Californians had science to measure and contain our consciousness, our truth. We science-minded people reduced meaning to whatever describes the material aspects of reality. Rituals were not included in the equation of what makes something true.

At about the same time I was coming of age, science-oriented Deconstructionists came along and exposed the scientific myth as one among many myths in order to prove the point that meaning is always referential and therefore always suspect, always a mere opinion. To the deconstructionists, rituals are something else to deconstruct to show that they do not hold any meaning at all. My study does not deconstruct its subject for the purpose of exposing meaninglessness, but it does use some

devises of deconstruction for the purpose of examining the process of making meaning by looking at some of the pieces of the operation of knowledge creation.

I use the word ritual broadly. Generally I mean some sort of organized behavior that results in some type of transformation. Even though this definition is vague, I use it because I want to understand ritual in an expanded way.

Transformation

For the purposes of this study, I use *transformation* to mean change.

Many sources show that people believe in the power of menstrual blood to make miracles, cause widespread destruction and curse the unsuspecting (Frazer 1963; Delaney, et al. 1988; Delaney, et al. 1988). In India, the goddess is often understood as a bleeding maiden rather than a pregnant, birthing, or nursing woman. Grahn writes:

> She [the goddess) is frequently depicted as a woman at the moment of her life when the full creative power of menarche, the beginning of her menstrual cycle, has engaged her and has not yet produced a specific form. She is the exact moment of all-potential (Grahn, 1999, p. 287).

Although this is not the point that Grahn is making, it might be noted here that this may be one part of the explanation of the origin of the power and numinosity of

virginity. It would mean that one reason that virginity and virgins are so important to so many origin stories is that the virgins refer to the maiden who bleeds, not the girl who has not yet had heterosexual sex.

Gebser has a revolutionary view of transformation. He writes,

> Our task is to realize the predisposition in ourselves toward discontinuous transformation (Gebser, 1985, p. 42).

Metaformic Theory and Gebserian thinking about the ever-present origin make a provocative combination. If the ever-present origin were understood as represented in the image of the menstruant, perhaps a guide to the impending transformation to aperspectival consciousness could more easily emerge.

Neumann cites body adornment and sacralization as constitutive of the most primitive stage of self-formation, an important transformation towards individual ego consciousness. Neumann writes:

> This is evident from the widespread practice of tattooing among primitives and the fact that individual tattooing which does not conform to the stereotyped collective pattern is one of the earliest ways of expressing one's individuality (Neumann, 1971, pp. 307-308).
>
> The development of ego consciousness is paralleled by a tendency to make itself independent of the body.

This tendency finds its most obvious expression in masculine asceticism, world negation, mortification of the body, and hatred of women, and is ritually practiced in the initiation ceremonies of adolescents. The goal of all initiation, however, from the rites of puberty to the religious mysteries, is transformation (Neumann, 1971, p. 310).

The transformation mysteries of the woman are primarily blood-transformation mysteries that lead her to the experience of her own creativity and produce a numinous impression on the man. This phenomenon has its roots in psychobiological development. The transformation from girl to woman is far more accentuated than the corresponding development from boy to man. Menstruation, the first blood-transformation mystery in women, is in every respect a more important incident than (sic) the first emission of sperm in the male. The latter is seldom remembered, while the beginning of menstruation is everywhere rightly regarded as a fateful moment in the life of a woman (Neumann, 1974, pp. 31-32).

The true method of philosophical construction is to frame a scheme of ideas, the best that one can, and unflinchingly to explore the interpretation of experience in terms of that scheme.
Alfred North Whitehead
(Whitehead 1985, ix)

Chapter Three

Methodology

Description of the Inquiry

This is an inquiry into the stories about menstrual extraction using the narrative method to collect, to handle and to interpret the information collected from the women I interviewed. This inquiry is about how myths are made of rituals as part of the continuing process of defining humanity. The narrative method allowed me to enter into the narratives and find the stories. It also let me focus on how stories told about rituals make meaning and effect consciousness.

The design of the inquiry reflects my desire to understand how meaning is made by understanding the meaning of the stories about menstrual extraction, including my own menstrual extraction stories. I chose to explore the stories about menstrual extraction because of the relationship between stories and meaning and between stories and consciousness. I use the stories of other women

to compare with my own stories in order to make meaning of them.

The data I explore in this inquiry is the transcribed and edited narratives of six women who practiced menstrual extraction, the books written or edited by them and the documentation of the process of the research, including the editing of the transcripts. In the first transcription, I made the record as detailed as possible by including all the audible sounds. Based on the reading of all the transcripts, I designed and documented a process of editing the transcripts (Riessman 1993, 13).

I used a hand-held cassette tape recorder to record the stories of six women who participated in menstrual extraction. Before the interview each participant signed an informed consent, and received a copy of the questions I planned to ask (see Appendix for examples of each). I asked the women to describe their experiences with menstrual extraction in as much detail as possible.

I gave each participant room to contextualize her experience and to attribute meaning to it. My questions concentrated on the area of *meaning*. I wanted to know what these women thought about what they were doing relative to menstrual extraction. I was curious if any of the women thought of menstrual extraction as a ritual. I documented

the details of the stories, partly to find out what the tellers considered to be important details and also because the details are often the most interesting part of stories. My priority was to record the stories as the women wanted to tell them. Whenever possible, the interviews were structured by the list of questions and by the responses. Generally speaking, I tried to get a response from each woman to each question.

The Narrative Method

The narrative method is a qualitative approach that suits my project. Narrative research is more about what people say happened than about what happened. Narrative is not history; it is the story of meaning. Narrative solves the problem of how to change knowing into meaning. Narrative ceaselessly puts meaning where facts were. Its goal is to know about a certain kind of experience. Stories are amplifiers of knowledge (Deslauriers 1992).

The narrative method meets the needs of my project: this is a study of narratives as the primary data (Narrative Research: Reading, Analysis, and Interpretation, 1998, 2). The narrative method is a way to enter into a discovery of the meaning of the significance of the stories as well as the study of what the stories have to say. I followed a traditional path in narrative research and I

used categories to limit my inquiry—description, analysis, and interpretation (Smith and Wolcott 1994, 11).

By *narrative* I mean formally-recorded version of talk organized around consequential events (Riessman 1993, 3). This talk includes both storytelling parts as well as other forms of discourse, such as question-and-answer exchanges, discussion or argument. I asked each woman the same set of questions. I was keenly interested in what the stories had to say. Narratives are raw, unvarnished, unconstructed, and often they lack sequence. I searched for the stories contained in the narratives. I looked to the content to form the categories.

The narrative method I applied to this research drew on more than one tradition. The feminist tradition is one that I cherish. I cherish the demand for liberation that it always implies. I am motivated by a vision of social justice and heavily influenced by feminist ideas. I embrace the feminist research goals to establish collaborative and non-exploitative relationships, to place the researcher within the study so as to avoid objectification, and to conduct research that is transformative (Creswell 1997, 83).

This study has similarities with feminist studies that elicit the stories of people whose voices are not often

heard (Gluck & Patai, 1991; Josselson, 1987) It also shares qualities with those studies that have collected personal stories of women's individual menstrual careers (Kaufert 1986) (Lee and Sasser-Coen 1996; Laws 1990). This study also shares qualities with those narrative projects that have made the narrative itself the object of study (Rimmon-Keenan, 1989) (Gergen & Gergen, 1988). Also, it shares qualities with other postmodern studies that focus on identity and other philosophical issues (Alasuutari 1997) (Riessman 1993) (Widdershoven 1993).

The narrative method is postmodern and it is also post positivist in that it is able to contain complex relationships in an organized way (Bruner 1990; *Narrative Research: Reading, Analysis, and Interpretation*, 1998). This method allows me to recast, within my model, the relationship between the research and the subject, and the relationship between and among stories themselves. I access the thinking of Edgar Morin (1982, 1982, 1992,1999), who promotes a paradigm of complexity. This paradigm accounts for the changing relationship among all aspects of the model by positing a recursive relationship between them. Morin says,

> A new knowledge of organization is capable of creating a new organization of knowledge. The old reductionist and atomistic paradigm, in which order was the only explanatory

principle, is replaced by a new paradigm consisting of interrelations (which are necessarily associative in nature) among the notions (Morin 1982, 378).

My method has much in common with phenomenology, which seeks answers in lived experiences. I too seek answers in lived experiences but the lived experiences are only the beginning of my method.

I studied the stories of lived experiences. I paid attention to the content, the style, and the language. I admire the phenomenology of Sartre, de Beauvoir and Merleau-Ponty and I can only aspire to be as grounded and true to my experience as these thinkers, but, because only part of our experience is accounted for by conscious, material explanations--aI did not limit myself to a phenomenological study. Phenomenology looks for essence, I look for meaning.

Grounded theory finds patterns and answers in the material of the study as opposed to an alternative in which a theory is superimposed over the data. In grounded theory, the data *speaks for itself*. I incorporate this element into my method. The stories created the categories I used for my analysis and interpretation. Grounded theory ends in a theory. My goal is to evoke a feeling about my subject,

based on my research, by igniting the imagination of readers.

In many ways the narrative method suited my project of exploring the meaning of menstrual extraction in many ways. I touch upon three of them. First, narrative and meaning are co-arising (Deslauriers 1992). Second, menstrual practices lurk at the roots of the narrative form (Grahn 1993; Grahn 1999). Third, narratives about menstrual practices have been very important to many people across cultures and across time (Mead 1967).

On the first point, narrative and meaning are inextricably entwined; knowledge comes from stories. A primary method of making meaning of experience is casting it into the form of a story (Bruner 1990; Mishler 1986; Riessman 1993). The narrative method allowed me to study my topic--the potential meaning in the stories of menstrual extraction-- by recasting the relationship between the question and the answer, between the questioner and the questioned, and between the content and the form.

The Paradigm of Complexity

Morin promotes a paradigm of complexity that made this type of inquiry possible. His paradigm accounts for the relationship between oppositions (such as between the question and the answer, between the questioner and the

questioned, and between the content and the form) by positing a *recursive* relationship between all of these. Unlike a dialectical relationship in which opposites use each other to create equilibrium, a recursive relationship includes the opposites and at least the third factor such as the environment. The factors affect each other and are affected by each other. The result is ordered disequilibrium. Morin replaces the traditional paradigm of *order* as the only *explanatory principle* with a new paradigm consisting of associative relationships (Morin 1982, 378).

In my study, I am setting the stage for new knowledge by posing a question in a new way, by asking new people, and by defining a menstrual topic: what might the telling of the stories about a contemporary menstrual practice mean? Morin's point is that new knowledge can emerge when knowledge is organized in a new way.

I am positing a new knowledge of organization in at least three ways; my goal is to facilitate a new organization of knowledge.

One way that my study suggests a new knowledge of organization is by using menstrual stories as data for philosophical research. What is *new* is the role that menstruation has played in the western philosophical

discourse. It is *new* in western philosophy to consider menstruation as a source of philosophical knowledge.

A second way that my study suggests a new knowledge of organization is by crossing the boundary between history and gossip by using the meaning of the process of telling the stories to drive the results, instead of any objective goal outside the confines of the model of the research. Menstruation and narrative are inextricably entwined (Grahn 1993,1999). This is because the first human narrative was a story about a bleeding ritual. Before humans told verbal stories, they enacted their stories through ritual. The ritual was the structure of the story and ritual was the content of the story (Grahn 1999, 172).

A third way that my study suggests a new knowledge of organization is the way in which the data will constitute a new menstrual narrative, a new myth about a menstrual practice.

My goal was to bring out the stories elicited in each of the interviews, for the purpose of understanding layers of meaning: the meaning to the storytellers, the meaning relative to other stories about menstrual practices, and the meaning of my interpretation of both.

It is impossible to predict the effect of challenging a cultural taboo by telling menstrual stories. One direct

effect of this changing menstrual practice is found in the introduction to *Blood Relations: Menstruation and the Origins of Culture* (1991) by the British Marxist anthropologist, Chris Knight. Knight tells the story of how he came to consider menstruation a factor in the origin of culture. He was already into his first year as an anthropology postgraduate when he came across a pamphlet entitled *Menstrual Taboos*. In this publication, much to his surprise, he found personal menstrual stories that showed him that menstrual experiences were not simply biological events to be disguised as he had assumed, but could be empowering and positive experiences for women. He recounts how this tangential encounter, coupled with his awareness of Martha McClintock's article in *Nature* magazine documenting that closely-associated women tend to synchronize their menstrual cycles, gave him the piece he needed to tie his theory of origin together (Knight 1991, 36). In other words, as a direct consequence of women telling their menstrual stories in public, a fresh origin story emerged through innovative scholarship.

The Qualitative Approach

I collected, analyzed, and interpreted stories about the experiences of women who practiced menstrual extraction. This project fits all six assumptions John W.

Creswell says underlie a qualitative research design, but I emphasize three:

1. Qualitative researchers are interested in meaning--how people make sense of their lives, experiences, and their structures of the world.

2. The qualitative researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. Data are mediated through this human instrument, rather than through inventories, questionnaires, or machines.

3. The process of qualitative research is inductive in that the research builds abstractions, concepts, hypotheses, and theories from details (Creswell 1994, 145).

A qualitative approach allowed me to employ an interpretative method that is structured enough for an organized approach and flexible enough to comfortably contain the data.

The process of meaning-making is intrinsic to the theme of my research. I want to explore an incidence of meaning making, as a process, and I want to explore the content of the meaning that this made. My role in this study includes being part of the data and being the researcher. Within this qualitative framework, the fact that my experience will be included among data is seen as a potential asset because it adds a dimension to the inquiry.

A qualitative paradigm does not limit a study to objective or measurable realities. This served my research well as I did not anticipate a quantifiable result. Qualitative research methods do not emphasize the distance between the researcher and the subject of the research: qualitative methods support intimacy between researcher and the subject. The women I interviewed are in my life, past and present. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the freedom within the qualitative design makes possible for the emergence of patterns, possibilities and potentially, secrets (Creswell 1994, 4-7).

An Epistemological Study

I am comfortable with the less formal rhetoric associated with the qualitative approach. It is more important for my purposes to inspire a feeling, to evoke a response, and to provoke an engagement with the work than it is for me to prove any point.

This is an epistemological inquiry. As well as being a quest for an understanding about meaning, it is also an inquiry into where meaning comes from in the first place.

An Ontological Study

It is also an ontological study. I consider the origin of meaning.

Ontology is the study of being in general. It addresses the issues of the nature and structure of reality. My discussion approaches this subject by studying the origins of human *being*. From a feminist perspective what is philosophically most important is not *Being* and *non-Being* but *Becoming*. I think that so many western philosophers concentrate on *Being* because they are willing to accept things as they find them and assume that there is a *natural* order to be found there in the way things are. Sometimes they take for granted that the status of women and men is independent from the patriarchal structure. I do not take this for granted. This is why *Becoming* is appealing to feminists. *Becoming* for a woman in patriarchy is a way to go beyond the limitations of *Being*. For women in patriarchy, *Being* is being an *object*.

The study of *Becoming* raises the philosophical question of origins. Typically in the western tradition, origins point to *being* but a more process related perspective suggest that origins may be understood in complex ways. If the patriarchal God Jehovah made us in his image, then this is how we had better stay. There is no *Becoming* in that origin story, so I take no knowledge from it. I want an origin story and a philosophy that will embrace *Becoming*.

This is an epistemological *and* an ontological inquiry. It is an inquiry whose goal is to explore meaning, not by pinning down a series of facts, but by following a method informed by Process Philosophy and Morin's complexity theory.

Alfred North Whitehead has an alternative to fact-finding as a philosophical method. He insists that experience is the data of philosophy, experience is the method of philosophy, and experience is the goal of philosophy (Whitehead 1985). Whitehead's metaphysics attributes equal status to everything. All relationships between every aspect of the emerging moment are up for interpretation every new moment of every day. I find this aspect of Whitehead to be liberating and extremely useful. The point of the philosophical enterprise is to create an experience of explicit ideas so that the ideas can be criticized and improved (Whitehead 1985: ix). This is accomplished by evoking a *feeling* (Whitehead 1985:23). The *feeling* that is evoked is the expression of the creativity of the moment. It is what is new. It is new knowledge.

In this dissertation, my goal is to weave together a tapestry of knowledge in a new way for the purpose of evoking a *feeling*. I present an array of ideas and an interpretation of the stories of experiences of menstrual

extraction in order to arouse a sensation of understanding about how meaning is made.

Morin proposes a paradigm of complexity to replace that of reduction (Morin 1992). Instead of applying the principles of dualistic reductionism which says that everything is either *A* or not A, he presents a model with three (or any greater number) of elements taken together. In Morin's model the elements do not reduce to each other and none are subordinate to another. Instead they are explained by a theory of self-organization. This calls everything into question, because like Whitehead, Morin pays no homage to any one organization at the expense of another. Not only is the question of *what is a man or a woman* called to the fore, the question of *what is a human* and *what is environment* is evoked. Morin blurs all lines that previously had been drawn.

The good news is that this sort of a model allows for radical and subtle redefinitions. The challenge is to define the terms of the new equation and then explain them in terms of a system-wide explanation. This does not mean a *unitary theory*. Morin rejects all such theories (Morin 1992: 9). A system-wide explanation is one that accounts for the multi-dimensional embeddedness that describes the

place that humanity holds in the neighborhood, the plant, the universe etc.

Morin's method strives to extinguish false clarity. His method encourages letting go of fixed definitions. His method goes so far as to encourage no fixed method, no certainty, and no one way to know as the only way TO know.

The price of this is confusion and a certain blurry quality. This is because this method allows uncertainty to enter into the equation. Confusion is transformed into a virtue. By *confusion* I do not mean to emphasize the garbled aspect as much as I mean to emphasize the uncertainty aspect. To use a weaving metaphor, the loose fringe is the confusion.

Morin's ideas about method gave me the liberty to avoid a marriage with any one theory or one origin story. It gave me the freedom to concentrate on a few of them without refuting the rest or choosing a favorite for every occasion. It freed me to appreciate more than one competing theory at the same time. Morin's thinking also opens the door between disciplines by applying a universal acid that dissolves all the barriers that kept one set of authorities divided from another set of authorities. My method, based on Morin's method, is transdisciplinary (Morin 1992).

Morin's ideas gave me the language and framework to describe my potential findings (or non findings) in my research. For Morin and Whitehead, understanding the relationships among different elements, not the elements alone, makes meaning.

Morin gave me a paradigm to use as the basis of my study and a way to report on my research. The paradigm of complexity allowed me to work with a three-dimensional model. I do not aspire to draw neat and tidy conclusions. Morin's method is basically consistent with Whitehead's method. There are differences in the metaphysics of the two, but the differences do not make them incompatible. Process philosophy is the philosophy of an organism, a great big *One*. Morin rejects all *Ones*. Whitehead's *One* is so inclusive that it accommodates alternatives easily.

I needed all the room that Whitehead and Morin could afford me. In the recent past my subject, menstrual practices, has been marginalized, debased and unappreciated.

A Feminist Approach

The existentialist philosopher, Simone de Beauvoir, cracked open the western philosophical door to the subject of menstrual rituals and menstruation. For her,

> The human project is the interpreting of the body based on experience and the female experience is marked by menstrual behavior (de Beauvoir 1974: 38).

De Beauvoir, like Sartre, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty, defines the body as a situation, not a thing. *The Second Sex* is de Beauvoir 's exploration and explication of the *situation* of the western *woman* (de Beauvoir 1974, 38). In her study of women she studied the society that contains them. Women and men only attain existence within a society, otherwise they are not human, just animals (de Beauvoir 1974, 40).

Menstrual practices in western societies play a central role in the *situation* of women:

> It is during her periods that she feels her body most painfully as an obscure, alien thing: it is, indeed, the prey of a stubborn and foreign life that each month constructs and then tears down a cradle within it (de Beauvoir 1974, 32-33).

Here de Beauvoir captures the western assumption that menstruation marks both the failure of the reproductive system and the essence of the female. She explains,

> Menstrual blood represents the *essence* of femininity (de Beauvoir 1974: 168).

The moment a girl becomes a woman is the moment she most embodies her role as the *Other* to the male *Subject*. Simone de Beauvoir expanded the scope and terms of western

philosophy when she grappled with the implications of the idea that women were part of the patriarchal equation, not just inhabitants within its confines.

Simone de Beauvoir, as the original feminist philosopher, broke the ground that this study is rooted in. It was de Beauvoir 's existential description of women as the objects of men that gave women the standing to take themselves seriously as subjects. Carol Bigwood, Lorraine Code and Luce Irigaray, among other contemporary feminist thinkers, pioneered the feminist tradition marked by a democratic, phenomenological, existential, and always politically-aware framework. The body of feminist philosophy has opened the discussion of both the form of philosophy and also the content of philosophy. Carol Bigwood writes about her pregnancy in philosophical terms. Lorraine Code expands the theoretical boundaries of gendered epistemology and Luce Irigaray includes reports of meetings of the women's liberation movement as an integral part of her philosophical work.

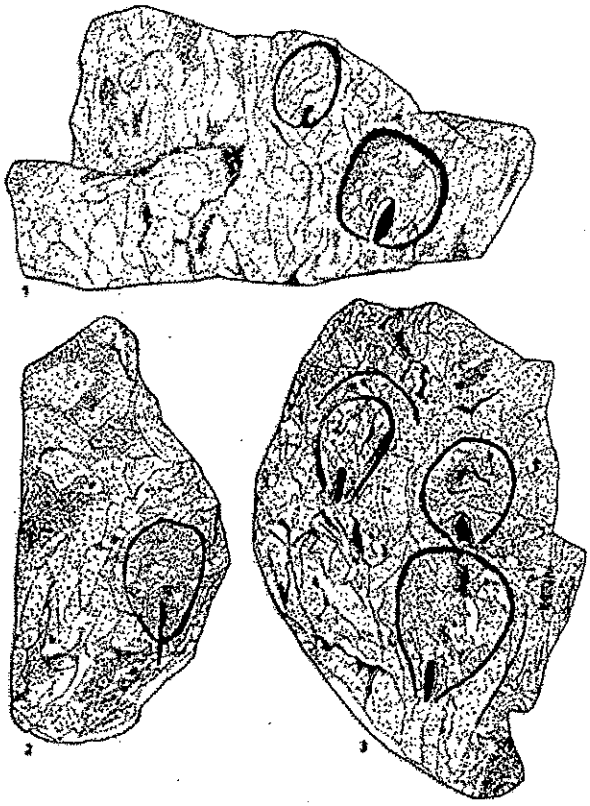
Thanks to these and other women, I am able to assume at the outset of this project that the human experience is accessible to me as a woman.

The Deconstructionist Trend

Recently the *Deconstructionist* trend in philosophy has practiced a policy of deconstructing myths. Foucault deconstructed narratives about gender to expose power relationships (Foucault 1980). Derrida deconstructed narratives about gender to expose meaninglessness (Spretnak 1991: 124-125). In this study, I do some deconstruction for the purpose of exposing meaning.

A woman's body has long been the subject of discourse.

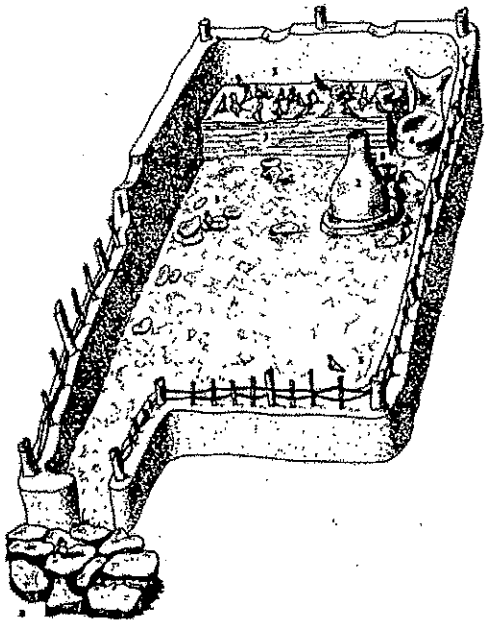
Photograph



This is an example of a rock carving from 30,000 years B.C.E. (Gimbutas 1991: 99). Whatever the message that was

meant by the artist who drew these uterine images, they document the interest of the artist in the subject.

Drawing



This is a sketch of a building shaped like a uterus from around 4700 B.C.E. (Gimbutas 1991: 133). The building was a shrine filled with images of the snake goddess and has a uterine-shaped oven. This is an example of how the female body was used to conceptualize an expression of consciousness—in this case architecture.

Telling an origin myth is always the struggle for power. All narratives have power agendas and implications

that account, at least in part, for what stories are included and what stories are not included, even in the consciously objective narratives, as in western science (Haraway 1989, 4). There are no facts in this field of origin studies; all facts take their authority from fiercely-contested theories that are in turn each packed with political dynamite (Knight 1991: 3).

In this study, I promote an agenda that embraces uncertainty, social equality, and complexity.

In the following chapter I introduce the women I interviewed.

Apart from the experiences of subjects there is nothing, nothing, nothing, bare nothingness
Alfred North Whitehead
(Whitehead 1985, 167)

Chapter Four

Who are the Women?

The women I interviewed are all *historic* persons; each one was a pioneer in the women's liberation movement. They participated in the women's self-help clinic movement, in the practice of menstrual extraction, and they are founders and directors of Feminist Women's Health Centers. *Self-help clinic* is the name of the grassroots meeting to discuss women's health, and to do self-examination and share life experiences. *Advanced self-help groups* practiced menstrual extraction and some started women's health care institutions, Feminist Women's Health Centers. (Note: self-help clinics and advanced self-help clinics, menstrual extraction groups, still exist on a small scale, but since this paper is concerned with the activities in the nineteen-seventies and nineteen-eighties, I refer to these activities in the past tense.)

In 1970, in Los Angeles, California, a group of women in the woman's liberation movement were driven to organize themselves in a voluntary effort to stop the needless death and mutilation caused by illegal abortion. Impatient with

letter-writing campaigns for lobbying unresponsive lawmakers, unsatisfied with demonstrating, and frustrated by (seemingly) dead-end legal strategizing, the women who pioneered the technique of vaginal self-examination done in groups called self-help clinics introduced an idea and a technology for changing the terms of the abortion debate. The idea was that ordinary women on a grassroots level—in the tradition of the generations of women who, as midwives, witches, and wise women, functioned as community health workers—would reclaim the territory of *women's health* from an insensitive medical profession which, first, maneuvered women's health out of the women's sphere and having done so, used medical science to prove that women could not take care of themselves[4] (Ehrenreich & English, 1978).

In menstrual extraction, the emphasis was shifted from the fetus to the woman. The question shifted from *when does life begin?* to *when does my period begin?* The advocates of menstrual extraction insisted upon legitimizing the woman's point-of-view of menstruation (and pregnancy and birth).

Self-cervical examination was the centerpiece of the self-help clinic program. Vaginal self-examination gave women a new view of themselves and the act of seeing

[4] For a good discussion of the way that, since the Enlightenment, medical opinion replaced folk wisdom, see *For Her Own Good: 150 Years of the Experts' Advice to Women* by Barbara Ehrenreich and Deidre

someone else's cervix gave women a chance to see each other from a new, more informed, perspective. Each public presentation included a demonstration of how to use the speculum. Vaginal self-examination requires a light (often a flashlight), a mirror and a plastic vaginal speculum. The speculum opens the vaginal walls and makes them and the donut-shaped cervix accessible for viewing and study (Federation of Feminist Women's Health Centers, 1991, p. 21).

Photograph

English, pages 110-128. In one case medical studies *proved* that higher education endangered women's health as evidenced by menstrual irregularity among college students (Ehrenreich & English, 1978, p. 128).

This is a photograph from the cervix's point-of-view (*The Proceedings of the Menstrual Extraction Conference*, 1974).

One female reporter who attended a self-help presentation used the word *revolutionary* to describe the effect of seeing a real cervix, especially when it was her own. She compared it to a blind person who sees for the first time (Frankfort, 1972). The effect for scores of women of seeing the hidden and forbidden province of their own vaginas was powerful and empowering (Ruzek, 1978, p. 127). Sometimes the experience was cast in mystical or spiritual terms (Shuttle & Redgrove, 1988, p. 179) (Ruzek, 1978, p. 53).

The Feminist Women's Health Centers were created to expand the self-help circle to include clients. The purpose of the Centers was, like the self-help clinics, to share as much information as quickly as possible with any woman (or, in the case of the vasectomy clinic, men) who asked for it.

Well-trained phone counselors answered routine medical questions, made appointments in the clinics, referred to other providers and generally helped women solve their medical problems. Information was often passed in a group setting and sometimes exams were done that way too. The gynecological clinic was called the Participatory Clinic.

In every possible circumstance, women were given the chance to see their own cervixes, discuss their experiences with other women in a group setting and generally share the information we were gathering.

The clinics were and are places where women's health information was amassed from the self-help clinic experiences and passed along to clients. Sometimes this information was and is directly counter to the information on the same subjects given out by the American Medical Association, which they also relate to the client.

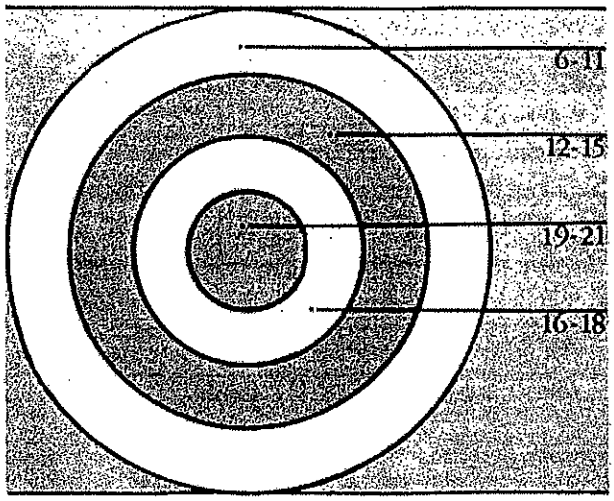
In founding their clinics, these women wanted more than medical care; they wanted a sense of pride and strength in their bodies; and they wanted to develop their own standard of what was *normal* in a woman's body. The women interviewed are among those credited with redefining the relationship between patient and provider (Wandersee, 1988, p. 87). The self-help movement was an indication of women's coming of age in terms of consciousness and self-empowerment (Wandersee, 1988, p. 89).

The Feminist Women's Health Centers provided a number of services, including women-owned, women-controlled abortion clinics, gynecological services, paramedic training programs, well-woman clinics, telephone health counseling, counseling, pregnancy testing, abortion

advocacy services, speakers' bureaus, and advanced research projects. Its philosophy stressed women's strengths, rather than crises and oppression. It generated capital to invest in other programs. The goal was not to provide alternative health care; it was to remake the whole health care system (Wandersee, 1988, p. 88).

The Feminist Women's Health Center women avoided a hierarchical organization and defined a system based on democratic ideals (Hornstein, 1974a). By the mid-1970's, of the at least fifty women-run clinics across the country, fourteen were Feminist Women's Health Centers (Wandersee, 1988, p. 88). The health centers were structured using a chart of concentric circles showing *participation criteria* (Hornstein, 1974b). Staff members self-selected to be in a power position or not-- based on how much the activities those chose to participate in resulted in a score on the *participation criteria.* The number of Directors (those whose score placed them in the innermost circle) was always changing. The boundaries between one region and another were permeable-- basically, the closer to the center you were, the more meetings and responsibilities you were expected to handle.

Drawing



This is the image of the *Participation Criteria*. It is reprinted with permission of the author (Hornstein, 1974a, p. 34).

When, in 1971, Lorraine Rothman and Carol Downer toured the United States to meet with women's groups and share self-cervical examination they were enthusiastically received. Women's consciousness had been raised but many women were frustrated because they lacked a structure from which to advance. Self-help gave them the ability to directly learn well-woman care. They were able to do independent research, to compile information and finally, to set up women-controlled clinics (Federation of Feminist Women's Health Centers, 1986, p. 3).

These women participated in menstrual extraction when it was legally risky to do so. They gave public workshops

to anyone who asked them to. They wrote books, including, *How To Stay Out of The Gynecologist's Office, A New View of a Woman's Body: A Fully Illustrated Guide, Woman-Centered Pregnancy and Birth, When Birth Control Fails: How to Abort Ourselves Safely*. They made at least one video (*No Going Back*) and at least one film (*A New View of A Woman's* Body). Carol Downer (my mother) was featured in *Ms* magazine with a Del-Em™ "Snapshot" (1996) in memory of the twenty-five years since the first self-help clinic meeting where she showed the other women her cervix (Snapshot, 1996, 35).

In this chapter I introduce and describe the women I interviewed about their relationship to menstrual extraction. Each woman's accomplishments are far greater than I have space to document. Each of the women I interviewed is known to me and we have our own relationship. My relationship with each of the women is complex as well. I am attempting to describe, not the entire relationship, but our common bond, which developed, from our participation in menstrual extraction. Whenever possible I use her own words.

These women qualified for my study because each one of them had practiced menstrual extraction as part of an advanced self-help group. The second qualification was that these women were willing and available to be

interviewed by me. The precise number of women that have practiced menstrual extraction as part of the self-help clinic umbrella is unknown due to the loose nature of the network.

Menstrual extraction groups could come together for one or two occasions with an experienced self-helper to guide them. More generally, the group met over a period of several months (or more), as with groups formed by college women. Some groups were loosely connected to a women's health center, and continued sporadically for years. Others, which existed for up to twenty-five years, were part of a neighborhood or communal living situation. The membership of some groups continually changed and others were composed of lifelong friends who had little contact with other women's groups.

Carol Downer estimated that there were about one hundred different menstrual extraction groups going at any given time over a period of at least ten years. She explained why she chose that number as an estimate:

> Wherever I went for many years, I ran into women who were doing menstrual extraction without any direct link known to us. We had a National Clearinghouse for many years but it was totally voluntary and we had no funding so we only had those names of women who contacted us. Because we were grassroots women, we did not concern ourselves with controlling menstrual extraction; we just wanted to share it with as many women as wanted to hear about it.

I approached eight women. I was unable to connect with one of the women. Six of the other seven women agreed to be interviewed for this study. The seventh declined to tell personal stories. The group of women that I interviewed does not represent a special caste of self-help pioneer. All the women who practiced menstrual extraction are equally qualified (except those who do not wish to tell personal stories) to be a part of my research. My resources limited my research to those women who were most accessible to me. This has no implications for the value of the stories of the women I did not interview. Each woman's stories count. These few interviews that I collected run deep with meaning but they are not *representative* of the width and breadth of women's experiences with menstrual extraction. Ephemeral menstrual extraction groups could come together for one or two occasions with an experienced self-helper to guide the group. More generally, the group met over a period of several months to a year or two, such as groups formed by women at a college. Some groups were loosely connected to a local women's health center and continued on a sporadic basis or as-needed basis for years. Others, which existed for over twenty-five years, were part of a neighborhood or communal living group. The membership

of some groups continually changed and other were composed of lifelong friends who may have had little contact with other women's groups.

The reason that such an arbitrary test, accessibility to me, does not render the study irrelevant is because menstrual extraction, as practiced in the advanced groups, was a totally democratic process. All women in the menstrual extraction group had authority and power within the group. There was no static epicenter or no inner and outer groups. The center was easily identifiable as the woman lying on her back with a speculum in her vagina; she was the center of all the attention. Each woman's experiences had currency in a self-help group. The differences and the similarities between menstrual extraction groups gives me confidence that any stories about menstrual extraction might fail the representation test but any group will pass the intrinsic value test.

One effect of the democratic makeup of the self-help clinic groups was that we loved and respected each other's bodies and blood in a way new to us (lesbians and heterosexual woman alike). It gave us direct access to each other's and our own vaginas, pelvic areas and menstrual blood. My study takes advantage of the openness and comfortable feelings of menstrual extraction participants.

I have confidence in my data without reservation because I know the interviewees felt free to discuss their experiences candidly and without shame.

The ages of the women, at the time they started practicing menstrual extraction, ranged from eighteen (me) to thirty-seven (my mother, Carol Downer). Barbara Hoke was twenty-nine; Eileen, Shauna, Dido and Katrina were all in their early twenties. All mostly practiced menstrual extraction in California, but everyone had had menstrual extraction experiences in many states and countries. They participated in urban and rural settings, Carol Downer and Barbara Hoke in urban California; Shauna Heckert, Dido Hasper and Katrina Cantrell in rural California.

I met Barbara Hoke when I was on a self-help tour of Florida in 1973. The United States Supreme Court had decriminalized abortion that January. The situation in Florida, like other states where abortion had been illegal up to then was typical in that despite the Supreme Court decision, women did not have any access to medical abortion care. Barbara's energy for social justice was and is unflagging. Like all the women in this study, Barbara dedicated herself for many years to the feminist pursuit of revolutionary goals. When I met her, Barbara called herself a radical feminist. She still does.

By the end of this dissertation I will have shown one important aspect of my relationship to my mother, Carol Downer--our relationship as sisters in the movement. This is not a complete image of our relationship by any means, but it is one that I cherish as a special gift of the women's movement.

In her narrative, Eileen Schnitger tells the story of her first self-help clinic when she was in college in Stockton, California. I was one of the presenters that day. I was a student in Berkeley at the time. The women's center at Eileen's college had invited our group to come to share self-examination. I do not remember Eileen from that day. I was preoccupied because a girlhood friend of mine was also a student at the same college. My girlhood friend did not come to the presentation, but I did visit her in her room after the presentation. She was with her boyfriend and future husband. He had not wanted her to attend the program. He kept his arm around my friend's shoulders when he told me that if she got pregnant, he would just "kick it out of her stomach". That was the end of an important relationship for me with a girlhood girlfriend. I did not know at the time that Eileen Schnitger would become a dear friend and coworker a couple of years later when we met again through the Feminist Women's Health Centers.

Shauna Heckert and I know each other through our health center work that spans almost thirty years. Shauna, like all of the women in the study, and I have spent many days and months as team mates on many different health center projects and as members of the Women's Health Specialists' board of directors. Shauna and I spent untold hours together lobbying politicians in Sacramento in the nineteen-eighties. We each also worked in our respective abortion clinics at the Feminist Women's Health Centers.

I came to know Dido Hasper through the women's movement. She was a part of a very active and productive self-help group in Chico. That group sent women to our clinic in Oakland. They trained at our clinic, and soon they had their own clinic. Today, the Chico Feminist Women's Health Center operates four clinics located throughout Northern California, each with many programs each. Dido and I have worked and played together.

I know Katrina (Kitty) Cantrell because we have both worked at the Redding clinic, and we have been members of the Board of Directors of the Chico Feminist Women's Health Center (Later called Women's Health Care Specialists). Katrina is a respected leader of the progressive community in Redding, where White, Christian conservatives dominate the power structure.

Here are short, biographical essays on each of the six women I interviewed about their experiences of menstrual extraction. I collaborated with each woman to write her biography, and the personality of each shines through to varying extents.

Barbara Hoke

Barbara Hoke is from Texas. Barbara loved her Mother and Daddy. She has two sisters and one brother. The brother provided the hell-angle and also the BIG forgiveness angle in Barbara's life. For ten years, before she practiced menstrual extraction, Barbara was married to a Southern Baptist preacher-gone-philosophy professor. She taught high school in Louisville and New Haven and put her man through Yale University. She followed him to Florida. Together they were active Democrats; they shared an interest in civil rights and social justice. Their marriage ended. Barbara became a lesbian and never looked back.

Barbara never does anything halfway. She is uncompromising with her enemies and forgiving of her friends. When we first met, Barbara used the pre-women's liberation name, Barbara Hoke Taylor. When she left Florida to co-found the California-based Oakland Feminist Women's Health Center, she left her marriage, her old heterosexuality and her husband's name behind. Barbara Hoke

rode the wave of women's liberation movement to menstrual extraction.

Before we met, Barbara was a co-founder of the Tampa Women's Liberation and Women's Center in 1972. Tampa Women's Liberation organized a Radical Feminist Conference that led to sponsoring a self-help clinic tour of the major cities of Florida. Abortion was still illegal in Florida. Barbara was a veteran of the protests at the Democratic Convention in Florida. She and other women supported Shirley Chisholm, an African American politician, for president. At the time she was working as a Land Researcher for the Florida Farm workers' Organization and was Coordinator of the Drug Education Program of Tampa.

The Women's Center was tipped off that the police were going to raid them on the night of the self-help presentation. They rented an alternative location for the night and the presentation went forward without problems. (the police did raid the Women's Center to no avail).

For Barbara, menstrual extraction was not a form of birth control. Her lesbian lifestyle limited the possibility of her unwanted pregnancy well enough. Barbara stated that she was attracted to the "visceral and practical common sense approach to knowledge" that she found in the self-help model. Barbara is an example of a

woman who felt betrayed by the patriarchal dogmas that had structured their lives who found the women's liberation movement a place where they could reconstruct themselves in their own image, apart from the father, brother, husband or patriarchal institutions.

After the self-help tour, Barbara decided to leave town, quit her job, settle her divorce, and move to California to help create the Oakland Feminist Women's Health Center. Barbara was in a menstrual extraction group for several years. Barbara called menstrual extraction a feminist sacrament.

At the time of the interview, Barbara operated her own real estate business; she coordinated Clinic Escorts at clinics in Oakland and the East Bay, as well as being active in many community projects. In her over twenty year career as a real estate brooker, the Oakland Association of Realtors honored Barbara twice. Once they awarded her *The Arlene Slaughter Fair Housing Award* and they also named her *Realtor of the Year*. The National Association of Women in Media conferred the *Athena* award on Barbara in recognition of community service. In honor of her work as an abortion rights pioneer, the National Women's Political Caucus recognized Barbara in 1998 as a Pro-Choice Champion.

Carol Downer

When I think of my mother, Carol Downer, I do not understand her in words. She is my mother and both a mother and a daughter of the women's movement (as all of the second wave women's liberationists were). She and I have had our share of mother-daughter angst, some personal and some political, but we also have shared experiences that went beyond that.

Carol was the elder sister of three brothers. She was raised between Los Angeles and Oklahoma, finally settling in Southern California permanently in her teenage years. Her Northern-European roots are buried deep in the North American experience. Her genealogy studies confirmed that her most recent ancestor came to North America in 1820. She told me that over the course of her life she has changed her perspective about her own identity.

She told me that she never saw or heard any hint of menstruation or its paraphernalia from her mother, grandmothers or aunts. Other than a junior high school movie in health class, she had no preparation for menstruation. The first time she heard that menstrual blood was associated with shame was when her junior high gym teacher scolded someone in a group of girls crowding around her desk with "someone needs to change her napkin."

Her plans to graduate UCLA were thwarted by an unexpected pregnancy when she was nineteen years old. The high-status Westwood physician that she and her sailor boyfriend, my father, Wally Brown, consulted confirmed that she was pregnant. He never mentioned the possibility of abortion; abortion was then not only illegal; it was invisible. Since she didn't even know abortion existed, she didn't ask. She later learned that that same doctor had been a leading provider of illegal abortions for well-to-do Westside women at that time. Her destiny became clear. She got married and she spent the nineteen-fifties having babies. Her marriage produced four children and lasted ten years. Divorce meant that she had to work to help support us children. She met her second husband, (my second father), Frank Downer, at her job. Her second marriage produced two more children and has lasted until the present.

At the time she conceived of the self-help clinic, my mom had six children living at home. I am the oldest and brother Frankie is the youngest. I was seventeen, and Frankie was just two years old. By the time she showed her cervix to the women at the Everywoman's Bookstore, she had already had one illegal abortion, two miscarriages, one *therapeutic* abortion, and plenty of patronizing, alienating

medical care. For instance, she had severe side effects from the use of the early form of the birth control pill that her physician didn't recognize as being connected with taking the pill. When she had the symptoms of a minor stroke, he placed her in the hospital, still taking the pill. Only when a neighbor, who worked as a nurse in the hospital, confided to her at her bedside that her doctor was not well regarded, did she stop taking the pill.
Well before her participation in the women's movement, she had established a lifestyle that combined homemaking and community participation. Obviously, the mother of young children is busy with child rearing. In her case, she was also busy outside the home. She was a Girl Scout Leader for my sisters and me. She joined the Mexican-American Political Association to support my dad and her Mexican-American children. She and my dad worked on a grassroots newspaper. Carol was active in local Los Angeles politics. She was the Chairperson of a committee to recall a corrupt city councilman. She encouraged and supported me to be a leader in the emerging sixties' rebellion against the Vietnam War and the demand for educational reforms in my high school.

When she joined the women's liberation movement in 1969, for the first time since her college days, she was

doing something for herself as a woman. This was a departure for her and the many women like her, who used the lessons of consciousness-raising to redirect their lives from their roles as daughters, wives and mothers to their role as fully-vested human beings capable of self direction.

It was Carol Downer who originally articulated the distinction between abortion and menstrual extraction using the Del-Em™, invented by Lorraine Rothman. She and the other women in her group were interested in learning to do abortions. Their idea was to challenge the medical model by learning to do abortions themselves, opening a clinic, getting arrested and through their defense, challenging the law. Originally, controlling or even understanding menstruation had nothing to do with it. It was only after the self-help group had begun to learn about their bodies from a new perspective that they realized that the patriarchy had tricked women into thinking we needed a doctor for such a simple procedures as early abortion.

Menstrual extraction was not a form of birth control for Carol. She already practiced another safe method of birth control. It was much more than that to her. Even though she already had had a life outside the home, her commitment to the women's health movement seriously

impacted all parts of her life. In the fall of 1971, just months after the historic meeting at the Everywoman's Bookstore where the group demonstrated self-examination with the plastic speculum, she and Lorraine Rothman left their children with their husbands, and traveled by Greyhound Bus on a six-week cross-country tour of women's groups who were interested in the self-help clinic and menstrual extraction. They financed the tour by selling clear, plastic speculums and from donations along the way. Soon after she returned from the original self-help tour, the Los Angeles Police Department raided the health center. They arrested her and Colleen Wilson, charging them with various misdemeanor counts of Practicing Medicine Without a License. If convicted, they could have been sentenced to six months in jail. The case was known in the press as the *Yogurt Conspiracy* because one of the *crimes* they were accused of was helping another woman put yogurt into her vagina as a remedy for the itching of her yeast condition.

The small self-help group quickly outgrew its original modest (if radical) goal of self-knowledge and its physical space at the Los Angeles Women's Center to become a national program. The fact that the self-help clinic work was becoming self-sustaining meant that she could

officially work at the health center, instead of being the lowest worker in an anonymous office setting.

The self-help clinic and menstrual extraction were vehicles of transformation for her. Before menstrual extraction, she was a housewife and mother, a temporary office worker, and active in her local community. After menstrual extraction, she became an extremely dedicated movement executive on an international level who was also a housewife and mother.

In 1991, following the demise of the Los Angeles Feminist Women's Health Center, Carol was admitted to the California State Bar and granted the privilege of appearing before the Ninth District of the Court of Appeals. She has continued her advocacy for reproductive right for women and civil rights in general.

She was featured in the "Outstanding Women" edition of *Life Magazine*, 1976 and in *Ms Magazine* (1996). She is a recipient of the Christopher Tietze Humanitarian Award of the National Abortion Federation (1988). The Women's Caucus of American Public Health Association honored her in 1989 for her contributions to women's health. In 1994 she received the Wiley W. Manuel Award for Pro Bono Legal Services from the California State Bar.

My mother told me that her most important benefit from her participation in the women's movement was to become a sister to her daughters, as well as a mother, and to see her daughters have more power over their lives than the women of her generation.

Eileen Schnitger

Eileen was born and raised in Southern California's suburban Orange County, known for its political conservatism. Eileen and her two brothers lived with their mother, father and her parents until her parents divorced when she was thirteen years old. Eileen's mother taught music in school and in church. Eileen's father was an eccentric self-styled inventor. Eileen is the opposite of the stereotype of a conservative child of Orange County. Eileen is fluent in Spanish and is close to Mexican culture. As a youth, Eileen listened to counter-culture music and plotted her escape from a suburban destiny. Fear of pregnancy kept Eileen from taking advantage of the loosening sexual mores of the time until she reached college. Then, as for a generation of women coming of age at the end of the nineteen-sixties, Eileen was confronted with the problem of sexual liberation without adequate means of birth control.

Eileen's first gynecological visit was typical of what many women of the time experienced. The male gynecologist began by finding an ovarian cyst, which he then cured by prescribing birth control pills. Later, as a part of her self-help experience, Eileen was understandably disillusioned when she learned that the healthy ovary forms a cyst around the developing egg each month which disappear after the egg bursts from the cyst. The Pill appears to cure the cyst, because under the influence of the artificial hormones, the woman stops ovulating; no egg matures and no cyst is formed. Women continue to bleed 3 days a month when the month's supply of 28 pills run out and the uterine lining is sloughed off, but it is not a true menstrual period. The doctor imparted his diagnosis while Eileen was lying on her back and while he had his fingers inside her vagina. From the point-of-view of Eileen's vagina, the doctor played the role of a defiler.

Eileen was a student at a liberal arts college in Stockton California when she first encountered self-cervical examination and menstrual extraction. Eileen attended a self-help presentation sponsored by the school women's liberation group. Eileen immediately saw the practical applications of self-help and bought a speculum. Long before she became involved with the Feminist Women's

Health Center and menstrual extraction, Eileen applied the lessons of self-cervical examination to her need for birth control. She became familiar with the routine changes of her cervix so that she would know which days she was fertile and which days she was not; she always knew when she needed to use a barrier method. If she forgot where she was in her cycle, all she had to do was look at her cervix.

Summers Eileen worked as a river rafting guide on the Stanislaus River. Eileen finished college. She and her boyfriend bicycled from Stockton, California to Cabo San Lucas, B.C. Mexico. Summers Eileen worked as a river rafting guide on the Stanislaus River. On a visit home, Eileen visited the Feminist Women's Health Center in Orange County. She later began working at the health center as a health worker in 1977, about one year after her college graduation. Eileen joined a self-help group of women she met through the health center. For Eileen, menstrual extraction was a form of birth control, and a form of training and information.

A few years later, Eileen married an old friend from high school, Ron Czoka. Together they have one daughter, Karina. Eileen and Ron divorced amicably after ten years of marriage. In spite of the divorce, the pair remain friends

and parenting partners who focus on their daughter. Ron is a postal carrier in Chico, California.

At the time of her interview, Eileen was still working within the network of Feminist Women's Health Centers. She is the Director of Public Affairs for the clinics, located in Chico, Redding, Sacramento, and Santa Rosa. Additionally, she is the Project Director of the Women's Health Specialists' Living and Loving Project, educational services for adults with developmental disabilities and their caregivers. Eileen is the founder and host of a weekly call-in health radio show, "It's Your Body."

Eileen has been awarded the Hirsch Award For the Advancement of Self-Help by the Feminist Women's Health Center. Eileen has lectured widely about self-help and menstrual extraction. She is an international resource for information about women's health.

Shauna Heckert

Shauna Heckert grew up in Rhode Island. Her parents came from working class backgrounds. Her mother, Barbara, was a first generation Lithuanian from Worchester, Massachusetts where her father was a bartender. Shauna's father, William, grew up in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania where his father was a milkman. Shauna has one sister and two brothers. Shauna's mother was the catalyst for her father

to use the GI Bill to go to college and to become an architect. Barbara enrolled herself in dental hygienist school and worked as a dental hygienist for forty-five years. She encouraged her four children to question the status quo and pursue challenging careers.

Shauna was fifteen years old the first time she became pregnant. She had high hopes for her future that did not include being a mother at that time. Abortion was illegal in Rhode Island and most of the United States. Shauna was desperate to end her pregnancy. She says that the three months in which she was trying to get an abortion was her transition from being a girl to a woman. For Shauna, unwanted pregnancy, not the start of her menstrual period, marked her initiation into womanhood. This was in 1970. Shauna found out she was pregnant at a free birth control clinic in Providence, Rhode Island. Although it was illegal to provide information about abortion, the nurse at the clinic gave Shauna a phone number of someone who could help. He was the chaplain at Brown University and part of the Clergy Consultation Service. Shauna met with him in his home. He gave her the number of an abortion clinic in New York, where abortion had been legalized just two months prior. With the help of her boyfriend who was four years' older and had a car and the financial support of her sister

and a friend who lent them some of the money, Shauna got her abortion. She remembers the day of her abortion as the happiest day of her life. She was not pregnant, after three months of turmoil and extreme anxiety. Somehow Shauna's abortion became known to some people at her high school because several high school acquaintances asked her help to get abortions in New York over the next year.

The first time Shauna heard about self-examination was when her mother read her an article in Time magazine about the trial for practicing medicine without a license of Carol Downer (my mother). The two women agreed that the idea of women doing self-cervical examination was great.

After she graduated from college, Shauna was introduced to the self-help clinic and menstrual extraction when she interviewed the women at the Feminist Women's Health Centers in California on a fact finding mission with the hope of starting a women's clinic in Rhode Island. Shauna was enticed to stay in Northern California where she joined the Chico Feminist Women's Health Center staff.

Shauna states that just talking about menstrual extraction changed her life. She used menstrual extraction for birth control from the moment she was introduced to it. Shauna describes her feelings about self-examination and menstrual extraction as total liberation attached to a

great duty to share the experience with other women. She wanted to share self-examination with her own mother. In 1976, she brought a speculum on a visit to her mother's house in Rhode Island. She showed her mom how to do self-exam and they both looked at her mom's cervix for the first time. It was during this self-help session that Shauna's mom told her she had an abortion when she was in her early twenties. Her mom had not revealed this fact to anyone. Shauna then told her mom that she had an abortion in New York while in high school. They were both incredulous that as mother and daughter, they went through a very similar experience and had kept this secret. It is a bond that they then shared.

Shauna said that seeing her own cervix made her feel whole and unashamed of her body.

She recounted the first time she was conscious of her shame of her female body. Shauna was a seven-year-old girl with her mother at an automotive garage waiting for the family car to be ready. In the back, in the dark, tacked roughly on the greasy wall, Shauna saw a girlie calendar. The image of the posed, naked woman made her feel ashamed of the woman in the photo and herself. The embarrassment that Shauna experienced on behalf of herself (and for her

mother) at being a woman with a dirty body lasted until she did self-cervical examination many years later.

Shauna continues her work at the Feminist Women's Health Center. She has been with the organization for twenty-six years. Working side by side with the co-director and founder of Chico Feminist Women's Health Center, Dido Hasper, they have expanded to four clinic sites, introduced new services and have exposed thousands of women to woman controlled health care and self help.

In the nineties, Shauna married George Pandelidis. Together they are a couple in the matrix of both of their extended families.

Dido Hasper

Dido Hasper was an only child in her immediate family. She was raised in Oakland, California. Dido's mother died when Dido was fourteen years old and her father died when she was a young woman. From her base in the East Bay, Dido explored the wider Bay Area. She heard Janis Joplin at the Fillmore, demonstrated against the war, and cruised Telegraph Avenue in Berkeley. Abortion was one- hundred percent illegal when Dido was in high school in the mid-nineteen sixties. There was as yet no abortion *reform* in California. If you got pregnant you either went to a home for unwed mothers or you went to Mexico for an abortion.

Dido helped a few of her friends get Mexican abortions. Though the experiences were terrifying and expensive, the abortions were good ones. One friend had a close call at the border in Tijuana when an American official, finding medication in the girl's purse, threatened to call her parents. The restrictions on abortion, racial discrimination and the Vietnam War were issues that motivated Dido's political involvement.

Dido moved to Chico after visiting friends and being attracted to the activist community. To support herself, she worked in the rice fields, did poster art for the State College's community events, and layout for the college newspaper. Dido came across the self-help clinic as part of her involvement with a group of women who had a women's health night once a week at the local Free Clinic. In Chico, no local physicians offered abortions and you had to be married to get birth control.

Dido had read about menstrual extraction and self-cervical examination in *West Coast Sisters* newsletter, but it did not seem real until she experienced it herself. When she saw the demonstration of the menstrual extraction kit, she had an immediate cell-level appreciation for what menstrual extraction could mean, personally and politically.

Dido first saw her cervix at a group presentation but it was not until a few days later that she really looked carefully. She was home alone when her period started. She put in a speculum and watched her period flow, drop by drop out of her os.

Dido's women's group became a self-help group and then a menstrual extraction group that went on to open the Chico Feminist Women's Health Center. The women operated their clinic for many years as a collective, sharing the duties, the resources and the responsibilities. The clinic was an immediate success with women who could for the first time get birth control and abortions without shame attached to their sexuality or sexual health care. The conservative medical community had other ideas and launched an all-out attack on the clinic. They did not approve of women running a clinic that competed with them. Dido led the clinic in 1983 when it won a large settlement from the Chico Medical Association for restraint of trade because they would not allow any of their members to refer to the clinic, work with the clinic or provide medical backup for the clinic.

Dido was both the Executive Director and a defendant in a 1994 case brought against six leaders of the Chico clinic for allegedly misusing unemployment benefits. After

an eight-hour raid on the clinic where all of their business records were seized, the four and one-half month long preliminary hearing captured the attention of the whole community. Supporters attended each day of the hearing in support of the clinic. Others helped the clinic defendants with childcare, lunches, and moral support. In 1988, when the charges were dismissed, the district attorney and other institutional health center detractors were neutralized. The reputation of the women and the reputation of the clinic soared.

Over the years Dido has worked consistently to bring health care decision-making to those receiving the care, thus empowering women to reclaim their bodies as their own. Working with other leaders at the health center she has developed a mentoring program to foster leadership of working class women.

Dido has two adopted children, a daughter, Carmen and a son, Joe. For Dido, the health center was more than a place to work; it was more than a center of social change; it was a way of life that provided her with two precious children and relationships with other self-helpers.

Katrina Maczen-Cantrell (Kitty)

Katrina Maczen-Cantrell is the granddaughter of Thomas Premo and Anna Frank Premo of the Western Shoshone

Reservation, Owyhee, Nevada. She is the daughter of Ronald Kay Maczen and Naomi Premo Maczen. On her father's side she is the granddaughter of Lithuanian and Irish immigrants to the United States.

Katrina was born in San Francisco, California in 1955, the middle child of seven children. When a young woman, her family relocated to the Redding, California area where much of her life has been spent engaged in local activism in support of environmental, women's and native peoples rights.

In 1985 Katrina joined the Feminist Women's Health Center, first as a volunteer, then as a health worker, and currently as Director of the Redding Women's Health Specialists. Choosing a path of providing women's reproductive health care, including abortion services in a rural, philosophically-divided, economically-depressed community has been difficult and even dangerous; the clinic has had 4 arson fires in a five-year period. Despite these attacks, the clinic, the only abortion provider in rural Northern California, has survived and continues to grow.

Her goal is to make the clinic reflect the diversity of her community, which includes traditionally under-represented populations. She has used her unique position to bring reproductive education and information to women

who might have otherwise been missed. Throughout her time at the clinic she has cultivated many friends and close working relationships, and she continues to work towards a broader agenda for community health. She hopes to build a constituency that will stand with her to demand safe and equal access to health care for all women.

Katrina's home is on the ancestral lands of the Pit River Indians of Eastern Shasta County in far Northern California where Mount Shasta dominates the landscape, and red bud and willow grow heartily. As a woman, a Shoshone, and a community activist, she has followed her Indian culture's tradition of health and healing and her family's tradition of public health advocacy.

When Katrina began doing menstrual extraction she was a young woman and mother. For Katrina, menstrual extraction was an expression of her own heritage.

Katrina is the only one among the women I interviewed that had a menstrual practice other than that of the typical western practice of hiding and degrading of menstruation. For Katrina menstruation was never thought of as a weakness or illness, rather it was viewed as something that was natural, and powerful.

In her early marriage Katrina followed the menstrual traditions of her husband's people. In accepting the

rituals of the Atsugewi band of Pit River Indians, she felt honored to participate in these affirming cultural practices, which supported her husband's hunting abilities. Consistent with cultural practices, Katrina and her husband abstained from sexual intercourse before he went hunting. Consistent with both of their cultural practices, menstrual blood and menstrual items were handled in a specific and reverent way.

Katrina was in a group of about seventeen women when she first saw the self-help presentation. All the women did self-examination and had a great time. No one felt weird. Everyone just jumped into it with enthusiasm.

Katrina's self-help group became a menstrual extraction group, primarily for the purpose of birth control and self-training. During the time Katrina was in a menstrual extraction group she also worked at the Redding clinic. Katrina is called upon to represent the health center in an often-hostile community. She is practiced and comfortable with media interviews, and she is a skilled coalition builder.

Katrina is a member of the Executive Board for the National Women's Health Network. She serves on the Shasta County Democratic Central Committee as the representative of District 3. She is a member of the Native American

Community Board and the Native American Women's Health Education Resource Center. She is a board member of the Chico Feminist Women's Health Center. Katrina has three grandsons, Brandon, Lewis, and Che (all are learning to hunt). She is currently anticipating the arrival of her fourth grandchild.

In the next chapter I describe the process of collecting and editing the narratives.

Only when you have crossed the river, can you say the crocodile has a lump on his snout.
An Ashanti Proverb
(*African Proverbs*, 1962, p. 7)

Chapter Five

Description of the Research and Editing Process

In this chapter I describe the process of collecting the narratives and editing them into stories.

The Preparation

My first step was to contact the women I wanted to interview. I did so by telephone, e-mail and U.S. mail. I reached all but one of the first eight women I contacted. Of the seven women I reached, six agreed to be interviewed. One woman declined because she did not want to tell personal stories.

My goal was to collect the stories of women who practiced menstrual extraction. My main method was to tape record interviews but I kept open other possibilities. I sent each woman a confirmation letter of the upcoming interview, a copy of the possible questions I would ask, and a brief personal questionnaire. Only Katrina Cantrell supplemented her original interview with written material. By the time I finished my dissertation, I had communicated with everyone at least once more by telephone, e-mail or in person about details of the stories. My thinking was that

the important thing was to collect the stories and to report them accurately. Generally speaking, I did not especially value either spontaneity or objectivity. In fact, I tended toward emphasizing subjectivity by including the women who were being interviewed in the process, to the extent that it is possible in the framework of a dissertation, by making the process as transparent as possible to each of the women and collaborating on their biographies.

The Interviews

I conducted each interview separately and I will describe each one briefly. Before each interview, I explained my project and the details of the informed consent form that I then asked them all to sign. Everyone signed.

My first interview was with Barbara Hoke. Barbara lives in Oakland in a Gingerbread-style house. We sat in Barbara's home office. It was just we four, Barbara, the striped cat, Pele, the miniature Doberman pinscher, Reno, and I. The interview lasted just over one hour.

My mom, Carol Downer, was the next interviewee. I conducted the interview in the family living room in her house in Los Angeles. My dad was around doing Saturday morning yard projects. I was lucky he was there. The

batteries in my tape recorder went dead just as I started the interview. Before I could panic, presto, my dad had replacements just in time. This was far from the first time he came to my rescue or that he was supportive of a project of my mother's or mine. The interview lasted about one hour and a half.

The next two interviews were done in Chico. I interviewed Eileen Schnitger in her living room. Charlotte, her dog, joined us. Eileen's cat is much too antisocial to be interviewed. The interview took almost two hours.

Although Shauna Heckert lives in Sacramento (about ninety miles south of Chico), I caught her in Chico for her interview. The main administrative offices of the Chico network of clinics are located in Chico. The interview took place in the conference room at the health center. It lasted over one hour.

The interview with Dido Hasper took place in her car, driving 90 miles north from Chico to Redding. Dido drove and talked, and I held the tape recorder. I hardly noticed the pouring rain or anything outside of the car. I was completely focused on collecting Dido's stories. Dido took the interview in stride. It was not unusual for Dido to do two important things at once. Maybe that is how she

accomplished so much. By the time we arrived in Redding, Dido's interview was complete.

We arrived at the clinic in time for me to interview Katrina Cantrell before a previously-planned health center event. It was a birthday party for a clinic supporter. The clinic was all set up for the party with streamers and cake. We met in her office for the interview. The interview went smoothly. As soon as the interview was over, the party began. Even though it was a party for somebody else, I felt as though it were a celebration of my interviews.

After the party, it was back to Chico in the rain. My set of interviews was complete.

I sent each woman a thank you card with a lottery ticket.

Transcription

The transcription of the interviews includes all audible sounds, pauses and breaks.

Analysis

Once I had the narratives in my hands-- before I did anything else-- I prepared the house and myself as if for a holiday. I did this because it seemed the fitting way to honor the project. Perhaps it is just the way I know how to behave before something important begins. I swept and dusted my apartment. I put unnecessary things away and

arranged my books. In between the chores, I put beets in the oven. The smell of roasting beets filled my nose. For a couple of hours I alternated between decorating the house with ribbons and such and cooking my meal. Dinner was ready by sunset. I filled the room with red and white candles.

I served myself butternut squash soup and roasted beets in a vinaigrette with roasted pine nuts. I added raspberry Jello and cherry lifesavers to the menu for their red color after I saw how beautiful the red beets looked in the candlelight. I put the roll of lifesavers in a pretty crystal bowl. I ate one for dessert with a glass of cognac. I listened to my current favorite CD, Ton Ton David (French Reggae). I danced a bit. I concentrated on the meaning of the stories of menstrual extraction. I asked the question out loud several times in several different voices. I ate.

Then, I began to read the interviews. I started with Shauna's stories. Over the next weeks I worked closely with all the narratives. I made edited versions of each of the interviews. I isolated the stories and compared them to each other. I combed through the interviews and isolated key words. Using the method described in *Writing on the Right Side of the Brain*, I mapped each of the interviews for a visual representation of the stories (Klauser, 1987).

One night I dreamed about gold ribbon. When I woke up, I wrapped the transcripts up in scraps of ribbon and net. I found a perfect pink plastic box that fit the transcripts perfectly. It makes a neat package.

Regarding the questions themselves, I am not satisfied with them. The first question, *Please describe your relationship to me,* was the least satisfying and the most irritating question on the list. I put the question there because I thought it would remind everyone that the process is about intimate subjective material. One problem with the question is that it tended to emphasize the historic ties between us instead of moment we were now sharing. In a way, the question provoked a bump, which ultimately helped to define the smoothness that characterized the majority of the interviews. Once the interviews went past the first question, they became more relaxed.

For the most part the interviews proceeded without much dependence on the actual questions. I tried to keep a low profile during the interviews so that each woman would not get distracted. Except for the first question, the questions did not seem to get in anyone's way, but they did not seem effective in eliciting anything that would not have come out without them.

The Editing Process

Before I made any editing decisions, I scrutinized the interviews and listened intently to the tapes several times.

There are many decisions to be made when editing narrative into readable text. Each decision is one more step away from the original. I balanced this with the help of the interviewees who reviewed the edited transcripts for accuracy. My first editorial decision was to edit out all of my comments (about ten percent of the total transcripts). Not only was my voice a relatively small part of the transcripts but more importantly my comments did not add anything useful to me. Then, while being careful to protect the words, syntax and attitude of the speakers, I cut all of the false starts, verbal pauses and superfluous words that did not enhance the narratives. This provided me with an edited version that was easier than the original to handle. I reread the edited transcripts.

I outlined the narratives using the outlining technique of branching suggested by Henrietta Anne Klauser in her book, *Writing on the Right Side of the Brian* author (Klauser, 1987). This gave me a visual way to *look* at the narratives, but it did not give me any new insight. My next approach was to convert the narratives into stories. This

was helpful. Looking at the stories in this way was suggestive of the *Categorical Content* approach (Riessman 1993). I organized the stories according to the themes. Categories emerged out of the stories.

My goal when editing the transcripts was to find and report the stories so that the stories could, as authentically as possible, represent the meaning intended by the teller and also, so that I could study them. I used the stories for the purpose of making meaning of them and I used the stories to look for evidence of previously unnoticed bits and pieces of significance for the meaning that I will report in the following chapter.

All six women who were interviewed reported that menstrual extraction and the self-help clinic were life-defining events. All were at one time full-time promoters of the self-help ideas. Four of the women are presently associated on a daily basis with women's clinics, the others are associated less directly as supporters, as clinic defense committee members, or as members of a clinic board of directors. The six interviews, like the six women, have much in common and yet each one is unique.

One meaning of these stories is that all the women wanted to be supportive of my work and me. This is probably

most important meaning for the study, but it meaning for me.

ese women, according to the interviews, participated strual extraction, this extremely personal practice, most purely political reasons. Four of the six women used menstrual extraction for the purpose of birth control, but all four of them had access to solutions other than menstrual extraction for birth control. The evidence contained in the narratives points directly to the proposition that menstrual extraction was developed and promoted, on a conscious level, as a political act. Each of the women used the word *control* at least once to describe her experience with menstrual extraction. This is definitely a political word. It is a word that expresses power relations. In this case, these women conceived themselves to be pitted against the institutions of patriarchy for control over their own bodies.

All of the women I interviewed said that menstrual extraction was very meaningful to them personally. For all of them, menstrual extraction was part of the self-help program that was the form and the content of their women's health project. Menstrual extraction, self-cervical examination, and the process of self-help group training are all examples of both form and of content.

The *Participation Criteria* revealed who in the gr was doing what and then reflect that back to the group This was a replacement for the traditional hierarchal structure. Whoever was attributed points from the criter reads daily mail, attends all meetings, works in all part of the clinic etc—is placed into the diagram of concentri circles (Hornstein, 1974), based on the self-help circle of democratic relationships that emphasize the uniqueness of each woman's experience. For many years within the Feminist Women's Health Center's organization, the *Participation Criteria* was the operating structure of the organization.

Menstrual extraction is a case of form mixing with content. Each menstrual extraction was unique, each one special. The fact that these women either did not need birth control or had access to it elsewhere shows that menstrual extraction was a symbolic practice, not a desperate personal measure. It may, however, have been a *desperate measure*, collectively, as a reaction against the limitations imposed on them by the traditional definitions based on traditional patriarchal knowledge.

Carol Downer and Shauna Heckert had had unwanted pregnancies and were desperate and alone, but that was before the self-help clinic and menstrual extraction existed. Eileen Schnitger and Katrina Cantrell talked about

their fear of unwanted pregnancy but neither actually got one of the scary, horrible abortions of illegal abortion legend.

Paula Treichler says this about the self-help clinic women:

> The feminist self-help movement of the 1960's and 1970's was not only the genius of alternative health care for women: it was also a free-speech movement that gave women the power to define reality. Its contributions, its articulation of feminist meanings, its publications, its popularity: all these created linguistic capital that gave weight to a non-medical definition of childbirth (Treichler, 1990, p. 131).

In the next chapter I explore the meaning of the stories of menstrual extraction.

Birth is a beginning, whose origins are mysteriously concealed, darkly as in the womb, and deeply, always in the stark open pulse of existence.

Carol Bigwood
(Bigwood, 1993, p. 38)

Chapter Six

Through the Speculum:

Is Menstrual Extraction a Menstrual Ritual?

In this chapter I present my analysis of the collected stories. It is a speculation in which I use a metaformic theoretical speculum to view in a novel way the stories and the written materials of the women. I explore the question, *Is menstrual extraction a ritual?*

I use *ritual* in the same way western observers do who describe the religious practices of people who are outside of the western tradition. Eliade and Lincoln are *outside* looking *in* at rituals. I am exploring a practice from both the *inside* and the *outside*, not in an attempt to reconcile multiple views, but in an attempt to unveil layers of meaning that may co-exist in complex ways, in complementary ways, or in synchronous ways. The kaleidoscope of relationships whose center is menstrual extraction is the structure of my exploration. I use this technique referring to Morin above to uncover what has previously been hidden by proscriptions held in place by the myth that arises from

the menstrual practice of hiding menstruation, which in turn holds in place the rule that menstruation is irrelevant to philosophy. I myself had respected the menstrual taboo by hiding all the evidence of my menstruation because I thought that there was no information there, only shame.

I use Grahn's approach to menstrual rituals of the past in my investigation of a contemporary menstrual ritual; I am investigating how meaning is made and how consciousness changes. Menstrual rituals are containers for meaning and for consciousness. The group of hominids who survived the attacks of predators to become our ancestors are the ones whose rituals created boundaries that separated them from other animals. Rituals are how humans express their understanding of meaning. Primal menstrual rituals contained meaning and expressed consciousness by expressing metaphors physically as metaforms. Metaforms create boundaries by expressing cultural meaning that has been constructed using menstrual-based metaphors.

When Saint Thomas arrived in South India and promptly instructed the non-Christian girls to hide all signs of menstruation, he was changing the consciousness of the people by changing the meaning of menstrual rituals and of menstruation. Being Christian meant that one hid

menstruation and everything attached to it. To the non-Christian people, menstruation meant many varied things, but to the Christian consciousness, the meaning of menstruation was shame, and shame must be hidden.

One reason I chose to raise the discussion of meaning-making by comparing menstrual extraction to archaic menstrual rituals is because rituals are observable behaviors, so comparison is possible. This enabled me to experiment by applying the insights of Eliade, Lincoln, Turner and others who studied indiginous rituals to this contemporary practice. A defining feature of the religious rituals of pre-literate people is the calling forth of original time through the reenactment of the older, foundational event. This creates time by expressing, through the enactment of ritual, a boundary of before and after.

If menstrual extraction can be qualified as a ritual in this religious, foundational and archaic sense, then I can search for signs of the boundaries that are being crossed and thereby defined. I can search for signs of original time and timelessness that is implied. Importantly, I can look for examples of what was transformed, what meaning was made and how consciousness was impacted.

I use a chart to compare eighteen characteristics of menstrual seclusion rituals and the practices of menstrual extraction. I do so to discern whether or not menstrual extraction repeats a mythical example and thereby can be considered a foundational ritual.

I discuss the various types of transformation-- a feature of ritual--that menstrual extraction brings about. I present sections from the stories of women involved in menstrual extraction, and then I discuss occasions of transformation that seem to be tied directly to menstrual extraction. I explore three types of transformation: transformation of the women involved, transformation of the physical locations (the Feminist Women's Health Centers) and transformation of language.

In this chapter, I present the interviewee's quotes by naming the speaker in bold print, then setting off her words in single spaced blocks that are not indented.

This chapter is divided into three sections. Each section focuses on a question:

Did the women consider menstrual extraction a ritual?

Did menstrual extraction repeat a mythical example?

Did transformation occur?

Was Menstrual extraction a Ritual?

In the following section the women involved with menstrual extraction give their answer to the question, was menstrual extraction a ritual?

Carol Downer

In the beginning, our interest was in controlling our reproduction. That was our complete focus. At that time, to us, menstruation was just something that happened. We were developing abortion. We were mastering the techniques. We were going to capture the technology of abortion. We thought in terms of being abortionists.

We were close with women who were interested in menstrual rituals. Jeannie Hirsh was still working with Margaret Mead at the time we met her in 1971 and she was very interested in the topic of the menstrual huts. We thought it was interesting but it did not frame our thinking. It was not our paradigm. At first, we were not challenging the paradigm of performing an abortion. We were challenging who could provide abortions and we were seizing the technology so we could do abortions ourselves.

Eileen Schnitger

From the point of view of what I thought then, at the time I was doing menstrual extraction, I think not. At that time in my life my whole idea of all ritual was negatively tainted from my religious upbringing. I thought that a ritual was a meaningless practice that someone makes you do for some reason of his or her own, completely separate from the people doing it.

I loved the lack of bureaucracy of menstrual extraction. It is a strictly *woman to woman* situation. There was nothing between the technology and us or between the process and us--no money, no appointments. You did not even have to go farther than your own kitchen if that is what you wanted.

The only person to ask if what you were doing was okay was yourself. There were other women to check with but only if you wanted to. There was no law to tell you what to do or how to do it.

Shauna Heckert

No. I just don't think about things that way.

All of the women in my group did menstrual extraction as a way to learn to do early abortions. We were pushing the envelope. I think there was an element of defiance present; we were showing the world that we would never go back to when males knew more about the female's body than the females did.

We did menstrual extraction because we could. It is not too complicated or far-fetched for a group of average women to figure out. In fact, it is very easy and straightforward—nothing too scary like surgery.

On second thought, there are aspects of how we conducted ourselves in the self-help clinic meetings and in menstrual extraction that seem ritualistic. There was a pattern that was repeated each time we did menstrual extraction. First, the woman always gets to see her own cervix first, before other people see it. She is in control, she makes the decisions of how it's going to happen, who's going to be doing what. Then there is the planning that goes on before anything happens. It's very participatory and it's also geared to what each woman wants. Those are two examples of things we do each time that might be called ritualistic.

Dido Hasper

Initially I just wanted to have control of that technology. I wanted to know it forever. I wanted it to be something that I could do-- even in adverse conditions. No matter what laws or what governments tried to do, menstrual extraction is what I needed to not be afraid of my body.

I never thought of it as a ritual but it's very ritualistic, in and of itself. The rules of menstrual extraction are its rituals. For example, you never do a menstrual extraction with just two people. You always have at least three. Somebody has to hold the pump and somebody else has to work the cannula. Most of the time there was a fourth person there who tended to the woman. We always use

those little jars and that little get-up that Lorraine made up, the Del-Em™ We don't use the IPAS kit. (The first reference is to the menstrual extraction kit that was developed by Lorraine Rothman, the Del-Em™, and the second reference is to a menstrual regulation kit that was developed and marketed in the Third World by the Agency for International Development (1973) in their scheme to teach women in poor, rural area to regulate their menstrual periods as a method of population control).

There is a lot of discussion beforehand; the whole thing is usually planned in advance. First we discussed the plan and then when we were finished we discussed how it went. We were always looking at what we were doing and figuring out where we were in the process.

We had at least one taboo. We never gave menstrual extraction as a service, for money.

So, at the time, I never saw menstrual extraction as being a ritual, but it certainly does happen in the way of rituals, in that it's done the same way every time. It is not that everybody must always do it the same, but in your group, it's done the same way by your group every time.

Katrina Cantrell

Personal rituals evolved for me and I think the others as well.

We evolved what we would do with the contents and the blood. We claimed the tissue and blood. Some of us had burials, and others did their own thing. In that way rituals were evolved.

One of the women in our group, I'll call her Christine; she definitely did her own thing in her own way. She had her own kind of prayer service and we were all supportive of her doing so. We never had a lot of discussion afterwards. I am kind of amazed by it now. We didn't really have a lot of conversation about how we were feeling. Sometimes we were really rushed. We all had families. Some of us shared what we were doing with the family; some did not.

Barbara Hoke

The bottom line is that menstrual extraction was dealing on a level of response to oppressive abortion laws. But…

When we acted out our rituals we were acting out our understanding that our collective intelligence was greater than any individual's intelligence and that everybody's input was valuable. We needed our own research and our own examinations. That is what our ritual was--research and self-examination.

It was a paradox --there we were, half-naked, splayed, mostly on the floor, in a condition that is profane by the usual religious standards—and out of that came a worshipful thing. The most profane thing became the most sacred thing.

Menstrual extraction was a sacrament. It was an offering of oneself to others—of one woman to other women--in the name of sisterhood.

Did Menstrual Extraction Repeat a Mythical Example?

In this section the focus is on the issue, did menstrual extraction repeat a mythical example? In order to apply the insights of Mircea Eliade and his theoretical descendants to a contemporary ritual, I evaluated the evidence collected in my interviews for indications that menstrual extraction qualifies as a ritual by virtue of its being a reenactment of a primordial act. It is not necessary that the person or persons performing the reenactment be conscious of the significance of the act or that it be an exact replica of the original ritual. In this case, all but one of these women practiced menstrual extraction without any awareness of it as a ritual at the time they were doing it. The women of the self-help clinic

that I interviewed practiced menstrual extraction as a method of birth control, as a scheme of research, as abortion training and for personal convenience, not for consciously ritualistic purposes.

A ritual, in Eliade's religious sense, has at least some repeated gestures or artifacts that are identifiable as the sacred gestures or sacred artifacts. I used the narratives and the books written by or edited by the women who practiced menstrual extraction to explore whether there is a correspondence between the rituals of the far distant, primordial past and the present day. In making these connections, it was my goal to determine if menstrual extraction can be considered a ritual so that I can usefully draw on conclusions about ritual in general and apply them to menstrual extraction.

Eliade talks about *primitive* man and *archaic* man and I am studying a contemporary phenomenon. Is there a connection? The behaviors that Eliade describes among non-western people may be equally prevalent among all people of all cultures. The difference is that, in the west, the rituals of daily life are mostly invisible. The majority of the rituals of daily life appear to be simply the mundane behavior patterns of *normal* living. Usually these patterns are practiced without criticism or question.

Most people in western cultures do not identify behavior as ritualistic that in another culture would be seen as ritualistic. In western culture, the prevailing myth is that behavior in the non-religious world is mundane, and behavior that is sacred takes place primarily in organized religion. In the west, religion is about *faith* and science is about *facts*. This is because western beliefs, like the rituals of daily life, are understood through the lens of the scientific myth (Tarnas 1991) (Spretnak 1991). This is the opposite of the people studied by Eliade. Our ancestors lived by mythologies that emphasized the religious aspect of daily life, including their science.

For the purpose of comparison, I have prepared a table in which I list practices that are associated with menstrual rituals compared with the practice of menstrual extraction.

Eliade says that when the young woman sits in menstrual seclusion she reenacts the primordial event. Eliade writes that for the people involved,

> The primordial myth is the basis of the history of the human condition: it is in this that one must seek and find again the principles and the paradigms for all the conduct of life (Eliade, 1977, p. 46).

Eliade notices the close connection between the rituals of initiations into secret societies and the rituals of initiations at puberty. He says that all other kinds of mysteries derive from this revelation of primordial myth that everyone has to receive in order become a man or a woman. He traces the female initiation ceremonies to menstrual rituals and points this out to show that women did not merely copy males, as it may sometimes appear (Eliade, 1977, p. 205).

Table A

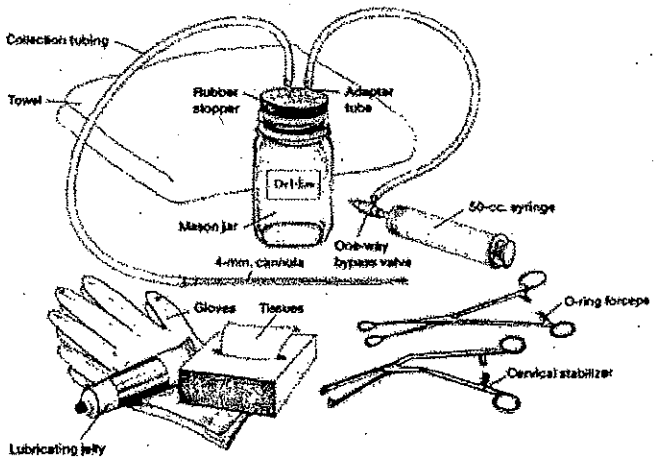
Comparison Between Menarche Rites and Self Help Practices

Characteristic	Menarche Rite	Self-Help Practice
1. cloth	Sits on cloth	Uses towel during extraction
2. pot	W/red cloth	Mason jar
3. lamp	Has her own lamp	Group shares lamp
4. sticks for separating	Used sticks to eat	Used medical instruments
5. mirror	Has her own mirror	Group shares mirror
6. carried in procession	Menstruant carried	Instruments are carried
7. kept off ground	Cannot touch ground	Obverse - the floor is favored
8. ritual bathing	Menstruant bathes	Pre and post hand washing
9. seclusion	Menstruant is hidden	The group is hidden OR obversly public
10. considered polluted or divine	Untouchable	Obverse - bleeding is favored
11. divination done	Using blood drops	Intense study of blood
12. cooking;	Pongala;	Assorted meals and

feeding sweets; alcohol	Menstruant eats candy; Menstruant drinks	snacks; Sweets fed to woman; Wine served
13. circling	Circumambulation	Group meets in circle
14. blood	Blood and blood substitutes such as animal blood, betel nut, ochre	Menses sucked into a jar and examined
15. companions	Menstruant is prepared	Group is a constant
16. gloves	Hands covered from sun	Gloves and plastic baggies used
17. assumes a special position	Sits with knees raised	Sits with knees raised
18. ingests something to start menstrual flow	Drinks lygos tea	Takes vitamin C

This table is based on a synthesis of tables that I found that list aspects of menstrual rituals that have a potentially corresponding self-help practice (Grahn, 1994, p. 93; Grahn, 1999, p. 193; Grahn, 1999, p. 213; Grahn, 1999, p. 225; Grahn, 1999, p. 269). The table reflects both correspondences and oppositions as potential points of connection between the ancient and the contemporary.

Illustration



Suzanne Gage, R. N., drew this illustration of menstrual extraction equipment some time in the late nineteen-seventies. The illustration was first published in 1981 by Simon and Schuster in *A New View of a Woman's Body*.

I briefly discuss each of the characteristics listed in the table to support the potential connections. I use examples from menstrual rituals, the interviews of the women involved in menstrual extraction and the books written by them.

Cloth

Aboriginal Australian people use string in their menstrual seclusion rituals, playing games that may have preceded weaving (Grahn, 1994, p. 167).

Pygmy women say that these knotted cords are *writing* although they do not know the system anymore. (Hallet notes the comparison to the knotted cord writing of the Incas) (Hallet & Pelle, 1975, p. 249).

Menstrual aprons figure in the menstrual rituals of the Ik culture of Africa (Turnbull, 1972, pp. 193-194). Menstrual skirts of woven leaves are typical among Trobriand Islanders (Malinowski, 1961). Metaformic Theory suggests that these grass skirts are, or are similar to

much older menstrual skirts that may have been the prototype for clothing.

In Africa, bunches of grass are suspended in front of the menstrual huts to distinguish them as taboo (Frazer, 1963, p. 690).

Sacred cloth is associated with menstrual seclusion rituals in Kerala, India (Grahn, 1999).

In India, the menstruating girl is specially clothed and purified (Lincoln, 1981, pp. 11-12). In at least one Indian menstrual ritual, a string of white silk thread is tied around the girl's neck (Lincoln, 1981, pp. 11-12).

A small bronze icon from tribal India shows a Harappa girl. She is naked except for an apron marked with a *yoni* (The yoni is the Indian equivalent of the Greek delta. It is the symbol of vulva) (Jayakar, 1990, p. 197).

In a metal icon from the Punjab hills the girl wears a pleated skirt, serrated at the edges, stretching to her knees, identical with the *kannakies*, the skirts worn by archaic Sumerian clay figures (Jayakar, 1990, p. 230).

Frazer compares the taboos of touching the clothing of kings with the taboo of touching the clothing touched by a menstruating woman. An Australian story has it that a man killed his wife because she lay on the family blanket

during her menstrual period. The man died of terror soon after (Frazer, 1963, p. 241).

The Dogon origin story of trade (cloth is the commodity) is a story of menstruation and twins. Twinning is a cornerstone of many African cultures (Turner, 1969). Commerce begins when twins sit down on a red ant mount (the Earth's menstrual flow). Two words were exchanged; *cloth* and *cowry shell* (Grahn, 1994, p. 234) (Hallet & Pelle, 1975, p. 249). This is how trading began for the Dogon people.

Weaving is often associated with menstrual rituals.

Carol Downer

I don't have any stories about the towel or surgical pad that we use when we do self-exam or menstrual extraction; however, I can remember why we did so. Two reasons: practical and esthetic. We wanted to make sure there were no spots on the table or bed from the procedure or from self-examination. Also, although we knew germs couldn't jump up from the surface we were lying on, it just felt more *sterile*. In fact, I don't recall ever seeing any spots from either menstrual extraction or self help, nor did anyone ever *catch* anything. The latter reason is probably the more important. It is just more esthetic to protect the table or the bed from being in direct contact with our anus and vagina.

As I write this I remember the many towels slipped under many women, as they got comfortable in the strange position on the floor or on a kitchen table with their legs up. Upon reflection, the reason cited for this practice—cleanliness-- seems a little thin the more I consider it. I

would be surprised if there were not occasions that I lay down to share self-examination with others without a towel but what I remember is a feeling of comfort offered by the towel (or sweater or jacket) between the ground and me.

Pot

Photograph by Gene Weisinger

This is an example of a Pongala pot used in India for the annual ritual of cooking red rice. The Pongala Ritual has been associated with menstrual rituals (Jenett, 1999, p. 528). In one myth that explains the connection between cooking red rice and menstruation, from the Cheruman

community, after a bleeding rock was identified as the god, Vishnu, a Pulaya woman gathered red rice, firewood, and a new earthenware pot to prepare the offering. After the rice was cooked, the bleeding rock was reshaped into a god reclining on the serpent--without beginning or end (timelessness) (Jenett, 1999, p. 167).

In a different menstrual ceremony in India, the girl cuts a coconut in half to make a sacred cup or container (Lincoln, 1981, pp. 11-12).

In Uganda and in aboriginal Australia, as in many other places, any pots touched by a menstruating woman should be destroyed (Frazer, 1963, p. 241).

During a ritual in India, a mud pot is filled with small objects. A leaf is placed over the top and tied with string (see Cloth). The girl sprinkles rice on the pot. She breaks the leaf and takes out the items and reads the omens (see Divination). Then, the girl receives gifts [offerings] (Lincoln, 1981, pp. 11-12).

The self-help women used a Mason jar (as pictured above) to collect the menstruation and whatever else came through the cannula and the tubing during the extraction.

Lamp

According to Frazer's reports, Diana of Nemi is associated with fire, flames and lamps. She is the huntress

and the midwife. For her annual festival her grove was set alight with many torches reflecting in a lake. In bronze statues of the area she is found with a torch raised in her right hand. Frazer makes a connection between the terra-cotta lamps, which were discovered in Diana of Nemi's grove and the Catholic practice of dedicating holy candles in churches. Frazer goes on to connect Diana in her role as Vesta with the Vestal Virgins in Rome who tended the sacred fire for the holy maidens (Frazer, 1963, pp. 3-4).

In menstrual ritual from varying parts of India, the lamp or flame represents the sun (Jayakar, 1990). In Kerala, the menstruant looks at a lit cotton wick that was stuck into a coconut and compares it to the sun (Lincoln, 1981, pp. 11-12).

In the Navajo menstrual ceremony called the *Kinaalda* one element of this complex ritual includes foot races toward the sun (Lincoln, 1981, pp. 30-33).

Frazer notes that the taboos to not touch the ground (see Cloth) or see the sun are commonly found separately or together for menstruating. From Africa to California, cloths or umbrellas are used to cover the menstruating girls heads to protect them from seeing the sun (Frazer, 1963, p. 690: 694).

In the British Columbian Tstsaut tribe a menstruating girl wears a large hat to screen her face from seeing the sun. She may not see blood for a year unless her head is covered (Frazer, 1963, p. 695).

In menstrual extraction a light is used to illuminate the vaginal canal to make the cervix visible. Often a flashlight is used but all kinds of lamps have sufficed for this.

Sticks for *separating*

In Tahiti and in Alaska, bleeding women cannot touch food with their hands. They are fed using sticks or often using hollow bird bones (Frazer, 1963, p. 242).

In a Tklinket ritual, the menstruant can only scratch herself with a special stick for fear of permanent scarring and she must eat by herself using a special cup and dish (Frazer, 1963, p. 694).

A bronze icon from tribal India shows a Harappa girl. She holds a bowl and a stick (Jayakar, 1990, p. 197).

Katrina Cantrell

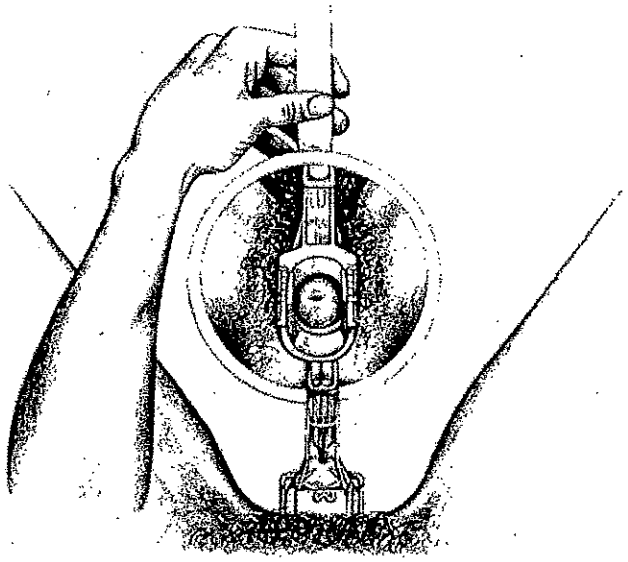
After we got some practice doing menstrual extraction, each one in the group took her special role. One woman would wash the instruments, one would be sure that we had all the instruments.

In the self-help clinic, instruments like the ones shown in the illustration (often kitchen cupboard

equivalents) were used to separate the sterile from the non-sterile or the clean from the unclean. We were concerned that we not put anything into the cervix that was not as free as we could make it of bacteria. Vaginas are not sterile but cleanliness was our concern.

Mirror

Illustration by Suzann Gage, R. N.



This is a drawing of the cervix as seen through the reflection of the mirror (Cassidy-Brinn, Hornstein, Downer & Federation of Feminist Women's Health Centers, 1984, p. 24).

There are countless menstrual seclusion rituals that involve seeing or not seeing or not being seen. The mirror is often associated with death and rebirth (but more with

death). The myth of Narcissus staring into the water and wasting away is based on earlier myths of river gods stealing anyone whose reflection is *caught* in the water (Frazer, 1963, p. 223). In Kerala, India, menstruants look into a mirror and *become the goddess* (Grahn 1999).

The mirror is a critical part of the menstrual extraction procedure. It is vital that each woman see her own cervix and that she watch the menstrual extraction as it happens. Mostly the mirrors were hand-held bathroom-type mirrors but a shiny toaster was used more than once in a pinch.

When the women looked into the mirror at the reflection of their own vaginas (or when they looked at each other's vaginas) they saw what women have not seen for a long time; they reclaimed the lost landscape.

Carried in a procession

Menstrual seclusion processions carried the menstruants and the sacred items of menstruation. Menstruants were carried as a precaution against the potential disaster that would befall the whole community if any blood should touch the ground or if the bleeding girl herself touches ground (Frazer, 1963, p. 265).

In a ceremony of the west coast of India the menstruant leads a precession on the way to water a coconut tree (Lincoln, 1981, pp. 11-12).

There are many examples of sacred objects and sacred people being carried in a procession (Frazer, 1963, p. 695).

In menstrual extraction there was no sign of the women in a parade, but whenever the self-groups met for menstrual extraction, including for the few highly publicized and public menstrual extractions, the set of implements were carefully tended and brought to the meeting.

Kept off ground

It is a common taboo that menstrual blood must be kept off the ground (Frazer, 1963, p. 265). Frazer explains that the reason the blood is treated with such reverence is because it was believed that the blood contained the soul and therefore, if it fell on the ground, the ground became sacred ground or taboo ground (Frazer, 1963, p. 267). This applied to almost everything touched by menstrual blood or by the menstruating girl. Not only sacred blood could not touch the ground but also the feet of menstruants or any sacred person could not touch the ground (Frazer, 1963, p. 688).

Katrina Cantrell commented on how often menstrual extraction was done on the floor of women's houses. Sometimes a kitchen table or a bed was used, but the pillows-on-the-floor set-up was common. Using the floor had the effect of making the scene distinct from anything else, mostly different from the medical model. It may be that this is a case of the obverse application of a characteristic.

Ritual bathing

Bathing was often associated with menstrual rituals. Among the Macusis of New Guinea, the Hindus of Malabar, and in the Americas special cleansings are associated with menstrual rituals (Frazer, 1963, pp. 696-697).

In an Indian menstrual rite the girl is purified with water (Lincoln, 1981, pp. 11-12)

Katrina Cantrell

I always took extra special care to wash my hands before and after menstrual extraction. I did this for both sanitary reasons and because being clean meant something special for me. Washing my hands symbolized a new beginning. Whatever you were before you wash ends through the act of mindful cleaning. I made a new space through my cleaning.

Clean and *dirty* are concepts tied directly to menstrual seclusion. Every culture defines its boundaries.

Seclusion

Sometimes the menstrual seclusions go on for years. In the Kabadi district of New Guinea royal princesses are kept inside for two or three years. Frazer himself observed girls kept in cages for up to seven years to prevent them from seeing the sun (see Lamp) and to keep their feet off the ground (see Kept of Ground) among many other taboos (Frazer, 1963, p. 690).

As one part of a complex menstrual ritual among some of the tribal people of India, the girl is kept in a shelter with her face against the wall. On the wall, drawings are done. The awakening desire of the girl to live is likened to the energy of the cobra in drawing and in story (Jayakar, 1990, p. 132).

In a typical Indian menstrual ceremony the girl is led to the inner room and is secluded for three days (Lincoln, 1981, pp. 11-12).

I have discussed the widespread examples of seclusion as the main feature of menstrual rituals. The element of hiding is so deeply etched into western consciousness that nothing seems more natural than to wrap menstrual pads with toilet paper so no one can see the blood, or using elaborate and even dangerous (Toxic Shock Syndrome) products to keep the blood off the ground, clothes or linens.

The stories contain three examples of public menstrual extractions. These were important events to the group. Whenever the women in the interviews mention one of them it is to say how great they were. Most menstrual extraction groups were secretive in part because of the questionable legal status of the practice. The public exhibitions were meant to bring the procedure into the open and directly to the public. It was the deliberate and conscious breaking of the taboo to hide menstruation.

Considered polluted

In the case of menstrual extraction, menstruation was treated as the object of positive attention. The stories show a reverence for the menstruation and for the menstruating woman. This is one more example of a practice being applied in its opposite form.

Barbara Hoke

Best of all, we were able to get it [menstrual blood] ourselves.

Eileen Schnitger

The blood is a form of communication.

Divination done

Mayan astronomy is driven by astrology; they even publicly offered their blood to the heavenly ancestors (Aveni, 1997, p. 6).

In Chinese astronomy the celestial pole, which is located high in the sky, was considered to be in the center of the Purple Palace (Aveni, 1997, p. 17).

In an ancient legend the moon was called the *funnel of the earth* because it was believed that if the moon were to vanish, all mental activity on earth would cease (Shuttle & Redgrove, 1988, p. 167).

In a seemingly oblique reference to menstruation, shamans in Alaska and in Siberia describe their psychic journeys as going to the moon (Owen, 1993, p. 99).

Barbara Hoke

Menstrual extraction was our collective intelligence.

We wanted to know everything the blood could teach us. Everything. We practically wanted to eat it. We did taste it and smell it and study it and look at it under microscopes. We wanted to figure it out for ourselves—together. We wanted to discover and to use the collective intelligence of the group--the menstrual extraction group.

Eileen Schnitger

We had a lot to say to each other about our types of bleeding and what it meant and how we felt about it.

To us, it [the menstrual blood] was important and fascinating. We would have our fingers in this little dish pushing around the blood, looking at it, squishing through clots, checking out the color of the blood, looking at the thickness of the blood, checking to see if there was any tissue in there—checking to see whatever we could find there.

Every woman is different and every menstruation is different too. We measured the blood, we compared it to past menstruations, and we compared it to the menstrual blood of other women.

Feeding sweets; alcohol

There are many food and drink taboos and rituals associated with menstrual seclusion rituals. Many taboo substances became associated with menstrual consciousness. Food taboos are important. One story says that the decline of the Polynesian civilization in Hawaii was assured because in 1819 the wife of Kamehameha the Great saw European women eating with men (Delaney, Lupton & Toth, 1988, p. 13).

Typically the menstruating girl observes the usual menstrual taboos that restrict her eating (Lincoln, 1981, pp. 11-12).

On the second day of the *Thesmophoria* (the ancient Greek menstrual festival) the only food eaten is the red pomegranate (Burkert, 1983, p. 243). On the third day, after they have fasted all day, the women eat sacred cakes shaped like vulvas and crescent moons (Meador, 1986, p. 98).

Part of the Navajo menstrual ceremony includes a sweet corn cake, uneaten by the initiate, which guarantees fertility of body and field (Lincoln, 1981, pp. 30-33).

In an Indian ceremony, rice is thrown over the menstruating girl when she leaves seclusion (Lincoln, 1981, pp. 11-12).

Breaking food taboos can be dangerous. In Ceram, women who eat fish during menstruation are thrown from a rock into the river (the river *takes* the bleeding girl like the reflecting pool *takes* Narcissus). In a different ritual, for eight months after the seclusion the girls can only eat foods that are cooked (Frazer, 1963, p. 694)

Circling

On the first day of the *Thesmophoria*, the women worshipers sacrificed suckling pigs, called *moon-animals*, to the deity, Snake. The women carried desiccated moon animal flesh. They formed themselves into a circle and danced like a snake.

During a menstrual ritual in India, the menstruant circumambulates carrying the sacred branch in the courtyard. When the maiden is in the fifth house she is, cosmologically speaking, in the center of the cosmos (Grahn, 1999, pp. 295-296).

Menstruants typically walk in a circle to use their body to re-create the structure and the movement of the cosmos and thereby, in ritual, become one with the universe, including that universe's temporal dimension.

This is a principal function of much ritual in Africa (Lamp, 1988, p. 212).

Barbara Hoke

We sat in a circle. We were the circle—the coven where everybody gets to see what everybody else is doing. We were the matriarchal ring—here is what I am talking about.

Menstrual extraction is the circle coming around to make a whole, holistic understanding of ourselves as women who are completely capable of taking care of ourselves.

Then, Barbara sang a song. She sang a full round of a traditional, Christian hymn. In her rendition, the song came over like a female anthem for self-expression without a hint of Christian sentiment, "May the circle be unbroken, by and by, dear, by and by..."

Blood

Menstrual blood has been known to disrupt social order, ruin crops, curdle milk, protect against evil, turn mayonnaise, and found grand civilizations and topple them (de Beauvoir, 1974, p. 168). There is no substance that accounts for more *mana* than menstrual blood.

Frazer accounts for the practices of carrying the menstruating girls, secluding the girls and protecting bleeding girls from the sun by citing the universal, deeply engrained dread of the powers of menstruous blood (Frazer, 1963, p. 698).

When genital operations, including circumcision, are performed in the Bambara culture, operations must be performed to allow the *wanzo* --the dangerous sexual principle, which comes from the female sprit--to drip out with the blood lost by the operation (Hays, 1964, p. 62).

In one of the few recorded examples where women are reported to bleed directly on the ground, during one phase of the *Thesmophoria* in Ancient Greece, the women who are bleeding sit silently, bleeding directly onto the fields in a testament to the power of the blood (Harrison 1962, 127).

Carol Downer

In one of the earliest self-help meetings, one of the group members originally passed on self-cervical exam that night because she was on her period. After considering this, everyone decided that it would be pretty great to see what a bleeding cervix looked like. It turned out to be really fantastic—the blood dripped out --drop by beautiful drop. So in the course of one night, the menstruating woman went from being ostracized (left out) because she was on her period to being the queen of the show. She definitely became the center of attention. Menstrual blood went from being a shameful thing to be hidden to something to share out in the open, right then, that night.

Eileen Schnitger

The menstrual blood was information and menstrual extraction was an approach to knowledge. I compare how we felt about menstrual blood to the way the Eskimos are reported to feel about snow. Although we did not have two hundred words for menstrual blood, we did concentrate on the details and make distinctions between types and aspects of bleeding.

In the self-help clinic the women loved the menstrual blood.

Companions

In the island of Mabuiag, Torres Straits, when the menstruating girl is let out of seclusion after three months she is carried by her attendants down to the river for ritual washing (see Seclusion, Kept of the Ground and Mirror) (Frazer, 1963, p. 693).

In a Hindu menstrual ceremony, after four days of being hidden from the sun, five women whose husbands are alive accompany the menstruant to the neighborhood tank and bathe the girl who is then covered in turmeric. The mat and the implements of the ritual are destroyed at the end (see Ritual Bathing, Cloth, and Sticks for Separating) (Frazer, 1963, pp. 696-697).

Friendship among women was a taboo broken by the self-help women and all the women in the women's liberation movement. One of the things we were liberated *from* was the myth that women could not be friends-- that we were doomed to compete with one another for the attention and resources of men.

Barbara Hoke

The groups were loving--you were appreciated. Everybody's cervix was beautiful. It was like an affirmation of how we

looked and smelled and felt. We learned that our body was sacred. It was a worshipful kind of thing

Eileen Schnitger

Menstrual extraction changed all rules about sex. It made sex be okay in a way that it had never been before. It made me feel strong to be in this group of women; we were tough because we were together. It is a strong thing to be liberated from laws and rules and customs that force you to appeal to some group or some person who is not a peer person for a service that has such a big impact on your sexuality. It knocks you down a few notches and keeps you there. To be free of the fear of unwanted pregnancy was huge. It was not all about pregnancy either. We supported each other in activities that were sexually liberating. A number of women were lesbians and they were just as thrilled as everybody else.

I think the feeling of how strong it made us feel is a true reflection of what it means that we're born female. Somehow we found a way to unleash the power of being female. Or maybe we found the special province of women and that made us feel powerful. There was something to do with getting pregnant, something to do with our families, something do with how many people there will be in our community, or maybe something to do with the whole next generation and the way we know about our bodies and the way we know how to make civilization.

I felt for the first time that my sex life was beautiful—like my cervix. None of it was icky; my vagina was not remotely icky and even my vaginal secretions were not icky anymore. The general impression of how all of our cervixes looked pink and beautiful and shiny became an emerging theme. It was not only that looking inside our vaginas was fun; it was also a practical way to get a grip on birth control and reproduction in general.

Carol Downer

One rule was that we always honored each woman's experience.

Dido Hasper

Menstrual extraction took place in a festive atmosphere--like a victory was won. It was serious, but upbeat.

The group is one reason I got involved in advanced self-help [menstrual extraction]. My group was a place where we took nothing at face value. We challenged ourselves to figure out things in a different way than they had been figured out before. When I did menstrual extraction I felt invincible and free.

Once I learned the basics, it was not so important that I practiced menstrual extraction because what was important is that is was there. I could always do it if I needed to.

Katrina Cantrell

The women from my menstrual extraction group are the kind of women you want to be with if you are in a natural disaster. I do not see the women often but I would not hesitate to pick-up where we left off because our connection is deep.

Covering hands

The taboo of covering the menstruating girl and protecting her from being seen or seeing the sun or other things was expressed as covering different parts of the girl's body. Mittens played a common role in keeping the sin off the bleeding girl's hands (Frazer, 1963, p. 696).

In the self-help clinic, either plastic gloves or plastic sandwich bags were used when doing uterine size checks, pelvic exams or touching the equipment.

Hitting with sticks

Towards the end of the three days of the *Thesmorphia*, the women have a party where they display bawdy behavior.

The women rage at their family members and each other. They work themselves up until they fight and throw stones and dirt (Meador, 1986, p. 98).

In Southeastern Bolivia, menstruants are tied up in hammocks and subjected to many rituals, including during the third month being tied up in a hammock. The old women armed with sticks run around the hut hitting everything, even the girl, to kill the snake that had wounded her (Frazer, 1963, p. 696).

In British Guiana, after her first period the girl is bathed and then beaten with sticks by her mother. After her second bleeding she is beaten again. Then, she is *clean* (Frazer, 1963, p. 697).

In the Jewish tradition, mothers slap their daughters in the face at the first sign of menstruation.

Eileen Schnitger

This was a self-help clinic presentation I did in Tijuana, Mexico. A high school student at a public school sponsored the presentation. We spent the first hour or so going with the girl to the different school officials to find out what room to go to. Finally we got to a large classroom or a multi-purpose room with rows of those combination metal chairs and desks. The girls were released from their regular classes to attend the presentation. There were over one hundred girls crowding towards the room but some boys used the desk/chair sets to build a blockade at the doorway. Boys ran around giggling and laughing and the girls were squealing. The girl who sponsored us was steaming mad, but she finally got us into the room. Then the girls used the same technique of stacking the desk/chair sets on top of each other to block the high

windows and block the doorway so the boys could not get in. We did the presentation, including self-examination, but the whole time there were spit wads and catcalls flying in through the windows.

Sitting with knees up (in a special position)

In a menstrual ritual of the Arapesh people from New Guinea, the menstruant is secluded in a hut away from the village to protect the village from the menstrual power. The secluded girl must sit in a special position with her knees bent and her legs open. In this ceremony the girl wears a special net on her head (see Cloth) (Mead, 1967, p. 177).

The self-help participant, when she was practicing self-examination or when she was doing menstrual extraction, lay on the table or floor with her knees bent and her legs open, just as the older Arapesh women taught it to the menstruating girls. A series of tribal paintings from India show a woman with her legs entwined in two interlocked palm trees--hanging suspended. Her yoni resembles an eye. Two hefty amazons with swords guard her. The woman looks like she is being tortured but she is a tree spirit (Jayakar, 1990, p. 146).

Among the Aht people of Vancouver Island, menstruating girls must stay in a squatting posture in a cage (Frazer, 1963, p. 694).

Ingesting something to start bleeding

The *lygos* plant is associated with the *Thesmophoria* and menstruation. Women drank *lygos* tea to bring on their periods for the festivities (Meador, 1986, p. 97). Like the women of the self-help clinic, the ancient women wanted their periods when they wanted them—seemingly separate and distinct from the issue of pregnancy.

Dido Hasper

Vitamin C was a big method of birth control then. Whenever anyone thought they felt like they might be pregnant, they would immediately take a massive dose of Vitamin C. Sometimes it worked. Sometimes we had to do an extraction anyway.

Three Types of Transformation

In the next section I discuss the role of transformation through ritual and through menstrual extraction. In this section I discuss three different types of transformation associated with menstrual extraction: the transformation of the women who participated, the transformation of language, and the transformation of place.

The Women are Transformed

Menstrual extraction transformed all of the women I interviewed. To be specific menstrual extraction transformed them, from individual women, operating within the family structure, to women in a group, outside of the

family structure, or any extension of it. These women, together with others in their group, founded and operated feminist institutions and actively participated in formulating and articulating the agenda of the Second Wave of Feminism. Menstrual extraction transformed the women from non-medical people into community health care workers in the lost tradition of witches, healers, and midwives (Ehrenreich & English, 1978).

In the Navajo menstrual ceremony, the girl is dressed in special clothing and ornamented, as she *becomes* Changing Woman (Lincoln, 1981, p. 19). The women who practiced menstrual extraction were women changing. They were changing the world around them through political struggle, and they were changing from the inside out, when they practiced self-examination and menstrual extraction.

Language is Transformed

Menstrual extraction and self-help experience transformed the participant's language. The act of naming something, for example, *menstrual extraction*, (without any patriarchal authorities) to validate the process was part of the transformational process. As it turned out, not only did the authorities not validate the self-help clinic language of menstrual extraction, they tried to co-opt it and use it for themselves and when they could not be

completely successful, they derided it (Frankfort, 1972; Benderly, 1984; Bradley, 1993; Stewart, Guest, Stewart & Hatcher, 1979).

Carol Downer

At the very beginning, when Harvey Karmen tried to claim that the self-help ideas were his ideas we had to do something. In a way, it helped us figure out what was different about what we were doing. We had to show people that what we were talking about was special. That is how we figured out what we were doing.

Menstrual extraction starts with women talking together, bringing language directly to the foreground of the process. Women talking openly about vaginas, cervixes, labia and other intimate body parts was almost as radical as looking at those body parts. Just figuring out how to name the female body parts was no small thing. The medical words used by medical professionals for the organs of reproduction, especially the female external genitals, is *pudenda*. There is the pudendal cleft, the pudendal sac, and the pudendal slit, to name only a few. According to Webster's Medical on-line dictionary, these words come from the Latin *pudendus* meaning: *that of which one ought to be ashamed*. For obvious reasons, the self-help women rejected these terms as not fitting. The issue of how one speaks about the body confronted all the women in the Second Wave

of feminism. A poem published in 1972 captures the female dilemma of the time. The title is,

The enemies of She Who call her various names.

a whore, a whore,
a fishwife a cunt a harlot a pussy
a doxie a tail a fishwife a whore a hole a slit
a cunt a bitch a slut a slit a hole a whore a hole
a vixen/ a piece of ass/ a dame- filly - mare
dove - cow -pig - chick - kitten - bird
dog -dish/ a dumb blond
you black bitch - you white bitch - you brown bitch - you yellow
bitch - you fat bitch - you stupid bitch - you stinking bitch
you little bitch - you old bitch - a cheap bitch - a high class
bitch - a two-bit whore - a two-dollar whore - a ten dollar whore - a million dollar mistress

a hole a slut a cunt a slit a cut
a slash a hole a slit a piece
of shit, a piece of shit, a piece of shit

Judy Grahn

This poem exposes the problem facing women who wanted to talk about their bodies in a new way. At the time when most of the women were doing menstrual extraction, the term, *girls,* was widely used to describe females in every sort of situation. In the health care field, the people who had abortions (even the grandmothers) were the girls. Whenever more than one female was together there was likelihood that she would become derided as a girl. *Girl-talk* is an epithet that some doctors used to ridicule what they imagined went on in the self-help clinic meetings.

Menstrual extraction is not the same as menstrual regulation promoted by the World Health Organization or as *menstrual aspiration* done in a doctor's office or *endometrial evacuation* performed in a clinic, no matter how much it may resemble these medical procedures. The definition given in this dissertation documents the term as the self-help women use it. Each of the women I interviewed used Lorraine Rothman's name when they described the menstrual extraction kit, developed and named by Rothman, the Del-Em™. I think that this is done because the self-help women want to protect the lineage of menstrual extraction. The term, *menstrual extraction,* takes its meaning from a group of women who were operating outside the limits of the patriarchy.

The second term I discuss is *woman*, and the third and fourth are, *clitoris* and *orgasm*. I cite these terms for which the self-help women devised new definitions. I speculate that the new definitions are possible examples of a process of transformation that occurred through participation in menstrual extraction. The women were empowered by menstrual extraction and this empowerment translated directly into an effort to change the language.

When the words *the woman* are spoken in the context of menstrual extraction, it is a reference to the person who is having the menstrual extraction. This word is also used this special way in the feminist clinics where patients/clients are referred to as *the women* in the clinic or *the woman* who is having a procedure. *The woman* takes her place in the center of the action and then she leaves it. While she is there, she is *the woman*. In menstrual extraction, the line between subject and object becomes blurred when the woman who is prone and vulnerable is both the recipient of the procedure and the most powerful participant in the procedure. Menstrual extraction is something women do together without static roles.

At the time they were practicing regular menstrual extraction, some of the women I interviewed, Carol Downer, Eileen Schnitger, Shauna Heckert, and Dido Hasper, gathered

together the results of self-help clinics and women-controlled health care, performed gynecological research and then wrote health textbooks. Menstrual extraction groups utilized their tools of self-examination and information-sharing to study specifically the structure and function of the female sexual organ; they then compared this knowledge to that in the gynecological literature. This study, which involved dozens of women, resulted in a redefinition of the clitoris (Federation of Feminist Women's Health Centers, 1991) (Chalker, 2000).

According to the medical profession, the clitoris is a small bump. Freud said that the only function of the clitoris is to heat women up for the real thing—vaginal intercourse (SE 7:221) (*Body/Politics: Women and the Discourses of Science*, 1990, p. Women 1990: 10). Clitoridectomy, the removal of this small bump, had been practiced in the United States since the 1860's. One of the last legal clitoridectomies performed in the United States was in 1948 on a child of five years old as a cure for masturbation (Ehrenreich & English, 1978, p. 123).

The self-help women saw that what the doctors called the *clitoris* was only one part of what they identified as a structure, not a bump or a spot. They describe the *clitoris* as the complex structure that includes the inner lips, the

outer lips, the hood, the shaft and legs, the urethral sponge, the bulbs, a network of nerves, many blood vessels, ligaments, erectile tissue, glands, and muscles; it is structurally equivalent to the penis but with a different arrangement of parts. For the self-help women, the *clitoris* is not an isolated body part. Blood pulses through the clitoris to marvelous effect. One muscle is related to the next muscle and so on and they all seem to relate to the *clitoris*.

In the process of reclaiming the *clitoris*, the word *orgasm* got reclaimed too. The self-help women claimed that female orgasm and the newly-documented phenomenon of female ejaculation could only be understood in the context of the whole woman—her body, her lifestyle, and her environment (Federation of Feminist Women's Health Centers, 1991). They found that some orgasms were more intense and more body shaking than others. They concluded that even the most modest female orgasm involved the clitoral organ and the tissues surrounding it, and that in more powerful orgasms, the clitoral organ and every part of a woman's body, including the tip of her toes, get involved. The self-help women loved to collect evidence on this subject. Learning to love our bodies was part of the menstrual extraction experience.

One of the earliest documents of the Second Wave of feminism is an article that was mimeographed and passed from hand to hand. The popular piece is called, "The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm" by Anne Koedt (1970). The women's liberations movement suffered constantly from deriders who claimed that all women cared about was having an orgasm, as if that was the silliest thing they ever heard. I myself have felt belittled by this claim. Today, awareness and acceptance of female orgasms are the norm. Thirty years ago this was not true. Prior to the Second Wave of feminism, Hegel's definition of the clitoris as an organ that is unable to give an orgasm dominated the popular mind. Judging from what women said in the course of the self-help experience, it is possible that vast numbers and many generations of women born and raised in patriarchal societies have been estranged from their own orgasms. It is no longer a secret that almost all women have access to an orgasm.

In the next chapter I discuss the implications that the changing definition of the clitoris may have beyond the meaning it carries to the individual woman and her partners.

Transformation of Place

Menstrual extraction transformed the everyday, mundane space (often in medical suites, sometimes in houses turned into medical offices) into a space in which relationships are structured that are outside of the dominant patriarchal paradigm. The health centers are not doctor's offices run by women, and they are much more than community clinics. The health centers do not fit neatly into any patriarchal definition. Instead, the women's health centers exist at the edges of the patriarchal definitions of *medical professional*, *clinic*, and *corporation*. The thing that makes the women's health centers more than a medical establishment or corporation is menstrual extraction. Menstrual extraction was the model and it is the information factory that created the knowledge that informs the clinics. Through menstrual extraction, the women's clinics became sacred feminist sites.

In the Navajo menstrual ritual, the ceremony takes place in the family *hogan* that is transformed to a sacred place through song and chanting (Lincoln, 1981, p. 18). The heath centers were transformed through menstrual extraction.

Among this group of women, menstrual extraction is a practice that had taboos. It was taboo to charge money. It

was taboo to have less than three people in a *group*. It was taboo to do menstrual extractions for strangers as a service. It was taboo to be a passive participant, even when you are *the woman* whose period is being extracted. It was taboo to use the abortion aspirators or equipment other than the Del-Em™ for the menstrual extraction. It was taboo for the women to be in the corner or the side; she must be in the middle, at the center of the attention. As far as the group is concerned, she is the center of the universe at this time (children, husbands, and lovers were tucked away elsewhere for that moment). Menstrual extraction had many taboos. All rituals have taboos.

Rituals transform a thing, a person or a place into a sacred thing, a sacred person or a sacred place. In this way rituals articulate the definition of what is sacred. The thing, or the person, or the place becomes sacred because of their relationship to ritual. The thing or the person or the place that is not sacred has had no ritual transformation.

Menstrual extraction transformed language by exposing the distortions of the patriarchal definitions to make new definitions more accurate and affirming for us. Everyday language could not explain the new relationships that are created through menstrual extraction. Language was crafted

to reflect the new reality, the new truth. This was the new truth, the new reality.

Menstrual extraction transformed the women who practiced it; it transformed medical offices into feminist sites of resistance and menstrual extraction transformed language to make it more meaningful to females. Menstrual extraction was a transformative practice.

Menstrual extraction repeated several elements of primal menstrual rituals. It was a transformative practice. It transformed people, language and place. This is enough to suggest that menstrual extraction, as well as being a personal act, and a political act, can reasonably be considered to be a ritual in Eliade's religious sense. Menstrual extraction closely resembles foundational rituals of primitive people.

The meaning of these potential correspondences is not conclusive, but it is provocative.

The next chapter is my attempt to make meaning of the results of the study. Regardless of my success or failure at interpreting these findings, I want to thank and appreciate the women who shared their stories with me. I have possessed their stories for the term of study and learned to love each story and each woman more. Now that the investigation part of this study is finished, I

officially return all the stories to the tellers. This is my way of leaving the door open for competing stories or explanations.

Once we had the freedom to open our minds, our imaginations went all over the place. Imagine that it was common knowledge among friendship groups when each woman got her period and when they were late. Imagine that the periods and the misses were discussed and evaluated and learned from. Just image that world.

Shauna Heckert

Chapter Seven

Was Menstrual Extraction a Sign of an End of Patriarchal Consciousness and the Beginning of a New Phase of Collaborative Consciousness?

Linear Time is Destabilized

Menstrual extraction closely resembles foundational rituals of archaic people. One way to understand a primitive society is as a founding society. The primitive is an earlier version of the contemporary. When the founding aspect of the primitive behavior is occurring, to the people who are doing the experiencing, it is not primitive--it is contemporary. The ritual is contemporary but the meaning of the ritual lies in its copying of a primordial act that is documented in myth. When menstrual extraction is viewed as a ritual, similar to primal rituals, menstrual extraction can then be understood in the foundational sense that it recreates the beginning of time, or the ever-present origin of metaformic theory. In this sense, menstrual extraction, like other pre-literate,

foundational rituals mark a boundary by repeating a primal example and in doing so create the space and the opportunity for Eliade's *in illo tempore* to be recalled in the present.

Linear time is both activated and subverted in this process. When the origin is considered to be a past event, linear lime is held in place; linear time is subverted when the origin is experienced as the present. When the women practiced menstrual extraction, and later when they told stories about it, they embodied the subversion of linear time by recreating a primal ritual—*live*.

Gebser's ever-present origin subverts linear time by representing the whole past and the whole future that is held in all moments as original moments of a massive experiencing unity. Process philosophy is a philosophy of organism that conceives of a massive experiencing unity that contains all the realities and possibilities of the past and future. The stories about the practice of menstrual extraction can be seen as stories about the experience of embodying the subversion of linear time. Unconsciously the women repeated gestures of primal rituals and in those moments and in the moments when they told the stories about it (as I am doing now), linear time is being undermined.

Separating things, such as beginnings and endings, is a way of making meaning. Any act of separation is an act of abstraction. The human menstrual frame of reference makes abstract thought possible. Without it, there is no separation between animal and human. Without menstrual metaphors there is no time because there is no *before* or *after* because there is no other marker that defines an origin. An origin is a boundary. Primitive menstrual rituals marked boundaries. Foundational menstrual rituals marked boundaries.

One effect of the boundary is to create *time* by marking a *before* and *after*, thereby concretizing the *now*. The boundary also creates *consciousness* by marking new limits of understanding, of knowledge and of awareness. The boundary created by menstrual extraction marked a new order. The order is not patriarchal. The new order is not individualistic or communistic. The new order is marked by a collaborative effort that holds the individual in high regard at the same time that it erases individuality to create a new collective consciousness.

An application of Gebser's thinking suggests that menstrual extraction is an example of the subversion of the present phase of consciousness, the *mental* phase, and a harbinger of the emergent phase, the *integral* phase.

Perhaps the most obvious and observable quality of the new phase is that it is marked by being on the other side of menstrual extraction (like metaformic theory). Simon de Beauvoir correctly intuited that, without menstruation to define the sexes, there is no more *woman* or *man* as was known in patriarchal terms. This is a reflection of the change in consciousness and of the new order itself. Men are no longer the first sex and women are no longer the second sex. Women and men are not what they used to be.

If Beauvoir's idea that menstruation is the essence of femininity because it is what defines women as (seemingly) irrevocably *Other*, then maybe when women take control over their periods, so that they no longer feel obscure or alien or at the mercy of pregnancy, they are challenging the definition of what it means to be a woman (or a man). If menstrual blood represents the essence of femininity, the fact that these women captured the blood suggests that through menstrual extraction, femininity is captured and transformed into something new. The definition of femininity is transformed and with it the definitions of masculinity and all the definitions that arise from them.

De Beauvoir's fact that femininity is defined by menstruation derives from all the patriarchal facts; within the patriarchal paradigm, menstrual blood is the essence of

femininity. The patriarchal truth is that menstruation defines femininity. When the self-help women practiced menstrual extraction, they claimed the menstrual blood, and they undermined the patriarchal truth and replaced it with a new truth.

A Third Sex?

Maybe women who practiced menstrual extraction became a third sex by redefining their relationship to menstruation and to each other. Friendship among women was suspect in patriarchal terms. In patriarchal terms, when women gathered together, the result was a hen party. Menstrual extraction was a direct outcome of women breaking the taboo of being friends. In the same way that Judy Chicago reports that breaking the taboo of being friends with other women led to her artistic representation of the changing menstrual practices, doing menstrual extraction led to women gathering together in non-patriarchal terms.

When menstrual extraction is viewed as a ritual, there is a volcano of meaning ready to burst forth.

In the past and in non-western cultures, menstrual rituals have served the human race as a method of learning to separate things and to connect things. Menstrual rituals hold metaphoric truths in place by acting them out; menstrual rituals act out the collective knowledge.

The Challenge of Globalization

The challenge of globalization is to make a new boundary while at the same time to maintain respect for the old boundaries. Respecting boundaries is the same as saying respecting people, because people are defined by their boundaries. The old methods of problem-solving are not up to the task of re-creating a world with a different set of boundaries. In a patriarchal global consciousness, power determines relationships, but in non-patriarchal global consciousness, power relations are challenged and new relationships, informed by new rituals, emerge. The logically impossible problems of boundary conflicts can be considered outside of the old logic—expressed by the old menstrual rituals--by creating new menstrual rituals with a new logic.

The new logic will be a transformation of the old logic. According to the old logic, there are two sexes—one sex has a penis, one sex has a vagina. According to the new logic, sex is not solely determined by the shape and form of the genitals. Biology is not destiny in the new logic. This transformation was expressed in the action of menstrual extraction. After women reclaimed their essence, no longer could the two sexes be divided by a biological fact.

Menstrual extraction is not the only contemporary blood ritual that expresses a transformation. Sex change operations are blood practices that are transformative. Wars are transformative. Tattoos, piercing, and other body adornments are examples of contemporary blood practices.

At this time, humanity is on the brink of possible ecological destruction and the issues facing us are critical. In today's world, politics and profits pass as legitimate motives for deforesting the Amazon Basin, killing species, and creating nuclear waste.

If it is possible to reverse the trend towards global annihilation it may be because a solution that is not merely rationalistic can be crafted using alternative blood rituals. Perhaps through the action of an alternative ritual, a new myth can be born that will be less ruinous.

These findings are based on the idea that meaning is made when a myth is told about a ritual. If menstrual extraction is a ritual, then the meaning of menstrual extraction can be discovered in the stories that are told about it. Meaning is not passively embedded or passively embodied but recursively related to the meaning-makers and to itself. Meaning too changes whatever it touches or is touched by. Meaning is not hanging around waiting to be known. It is around, not floating, but located in the

experience of subjects. Meaning courses through the universe propelled by experiencing subjects.

This application of metaformic theory suggests that meaning is captured and contained in rituals. Meaning, like orgasm, must be experienced. Potential meaning, like a potential orgasm, is made real only through the experience of subjects.

Meaning is first experienced, then, it is given language. First the women extracted their periods, then they told stories about it. Giving language to experience is one step in the process of meaning-making. Not all narratives are synthesized to stories and not all stories become myths. I edited the narratives of the women who experienced menstrual extraction into stories. I found evidence that the stories about menstrual extraction could bear the hallmarks of a nascent myth because they are stories about a foundational menstrual ritual.

From the point-of-view of metaformic theory, meaning is discerned from ritual, the implication is that the way people practice menstrual rituals is at the root of the meaning-making process. The actions themselves are a vital step in creating meaning. Telling stories about menstrual rituals is also a step in the process of making meaning

because stories have the potential to become meaning-making myths.

The myth-making process occurs over a long period of time and is most visible in hindsight. Trying to see the early stages of the process of transformation is like trying to see the oak tree by studying the acorn sprout.

In this dissertation I am participating in the process of refining a new menstrual myth.

Eros, which can assume, both separately and simultaneously, the face of love, eroticism, sexuality, and friendship, is the fundamental counter to the dis-ease of civilization.
Morin
(Morin 1996, p.66)

Chapter Eight

Validation, Limitations, and Potential Contribution of the Study

Qualitative research does not lend itself easily to validation. The standards of objectivity or reproducibility or testing that work so well for western science do not apply to narrative research results (Mishler 1990). For each editing decision made in the transcripts, there is a full complement of ever-changing power relations (Riessman 1993, 65). For each decision as to how to organize and manage the material, there are countless other options, rendering any claim to precise explanations impossible. Instead, I touch upon and discuss the applicability of three possible approaches to validation of my *results*: persuasiveness, plausibility correspondence, and coherence (Riessman 1993, 67-68).

Persuasiveness is an elusive standard to measure. Right up until the end of this inquiry, I was convinced that my goal was less to persuade and more to evoke a feeling about how the stories about menstrual extraction

might be considered in philosophical terms. Then, when I arrived at the previous chapter, *Was menstrual extraction a sign of an end of patriarchal consciousness and the beginning of a new phase of collaborative consciousness*, I discovered that I did want to persuade. The relative freedom from attachment to an outcome of this inquiry evaporated when I wrote about our ecological predicament. I found the stories to be rich in potential significance, and I wanted others to find this too. Thoughts of war and global warming dispelled my romantic images of blood rituals.

Plausibility Correspondence is a better tool for evaluating this type of research. This study was, in part, an exploration of the relationship between menstrual extraction and the realm of philosophical inquiry by way of exploring the correspondence, if any, between menstrual extraction and primal menstrual seclusion rituals. When menstrual extraction is understood to be a ritual, several urgent philosophical questions are brought into a new perspective. This can change the focus of the on-going discussion of ontology and epistemology. For one thing, this study suggests that instead of trying to *solve* problems rationalistically, it is possible to understand menstrual rituals as an epistemological method that

operates by allowing meaning to be expressed in non-logical terms. Metaformic terms are the non-logical terms that I applied in this inquiry.

The ontological discussion is challenged to explain the menstrual *message*. This *message* is not easy to discern or understand, in part, because it appears to be a principle of constantly-changing relationships and not an axiom or a formula. Whatever ontological solution is considered, it should be able to explain the relationship between the moon (and the rest of the planets, stars, and other bodies) and (universal) consciousness in a dynamic way.

In today's world of artificial light, synthetic hormones, processed food, and other dietary habits and lifestyle, whole neighborhoods of women do not apparently bleed together in synchrony with the moon's phases, but it seems probable that groups of women who live closely together in natural light, without extra hormones or toxins in their diet, as did our human ancestors, would bleed together in synchrony with the moon's phases.

The correspondence between menstrual extraction and the primordial menstrual seclusion ritual has not been proven, but it is suggested by the stories of the women who practiced menstrual extraction. The narrative method was

helpful for gathering data to be used to make a comparison of menstrual extraction with rituals of the past.

Another correspondence that proved interesting was the lack of correspondence between what the interviews showed to be the conscious intentions of the women and the interpretation of menstrual extraction as a ritual. The narratives reveal that the women who practiced menstrual extraction did not consciously consider their actions to be part of a ritual. Some of the women said that, in hindsight, they recognized some ritualistic aspects of menstrual extraction. This is in contrast to the eighteen examples of gestures of menstrual extraction that are similar or identical to the practice of menstrual rituals in the past. The narrative method was successful in exposing this contrast.

This may suggest that either the rituals and the metaforms or the rituals or the metaforms that they express may be expressions of what may become the precursor to a myth. This may be a glimpse of the process of unconscious forces expressing themselves as a process of transforming consciousness.

Perhaps the most important correspondence to evaluate is that between menstruation and blood. Until this connection is reestablished, outmoded patriarchal notions

will encumber the philosophical enterprise. One test of the plausibility of this correspondence as shown through the course of this inquiry is how each reader responds to the idea in the previous chapter that war is a menstrual ritual. If this idea gave the reader a jolt, the correspondence between menstruation and blood was not made plausible. If, on the other hand, the reader said a private *aha*, the plausibility of this correspondence within the context of this dissertation can be confirmed.

The *coherence* of this project depends on the coherence of my menstrual story that now includes a scholarly inquiry into other menstrual stories. To the degree that I was able to turn a series of menstrual stories into a philosophical narrative, the dissertation has coherence. To the degree that my menstrual stories remain ambiguous, the underlying structure of this dissertation is ambiguous. My menstruations have yet to send me a totally decipherable message. Each menstrual experience is unique and each is part of a bigger pattern that is personal, social, and cosmic. Through the process of scholarly research, menstruation was treated as a philosophical subject (at least to me). If I judge coherence by my personal menstrual career, then I can safely say that this inquiry fits into that category of mysterious coherence.

In considering the issue of the validation of the results of this inquiry, I am judging its success by the standard articulated for speculative philosophy by Alfred North Whitehead. Whitehead says that the goal of speculative philosophy is to *evoke a feeling* so that the present moment includes something new, a new feeling, a new idea, a new perspective that will have a direct impact on the next moment to come. Personally, I have succeeded in challenging some of my closely-held ideas and in adopting some unfamiliar ideas, and some new ideas. Therefore, this inquiry is a personal success. To make this judgment complete, I wait for the feedback from readers.

Limitations and Challenges

The narrative method was very useful to me. The greatest weakness in the method that I observed was not of the narrative method itself, but of my application of it. The questions that structured the interviews turned out to create an artifice that needed to be worked through with my interviewees, rather than facilitating the interviews. The fact that I had known all the people that I interviewed as friends and colleagues had many positive aspects, but one negative aspect was that I felt that some of the women, sometimes during the interviews, felt uncomfortable talking about things that we already knew between us. Instead of

opening up the interview as I would have liked, the questions and the one-to-one structure were something artificial between us. I think that if I had gathered all the women together for the purpose of remembering and telling stories together, even more material might have emerged because we all may have been comfortable in a group setting.

When I began exploring the stories of menstrual extraction, I was curious about what I might find, and I was confident that whatever the self-help women had to say, it would be important. My curiosity about the subject was rewarded with even more intriguing possibilities and my confidence in the women was rewarded with excellent material. Menstrual extraction as a philosophical topic proved to be a challenge with accompanying rewards.

I found it challenging to express ideas about the hidden aspects of menstruation. It is one thing to conceive of the nature of the hidden meanings of menstruation in the deep space of my own mind, but it is much harder to express the idea in words provided to me by my culture that were designed to obscure the subject of menstruation. It was a challenge for me to deal with material that ranged from the most intimate to the most abstract without succumbing to the temptation to find a middle. By taking menstrual

extraction as a philosophical topic, I was challenged to know both blood and philosophy in new ways.

The stigma attached to menstruation haunted this study. Perhaps the stigma was carried most effectively in the form of my own doubts. The obscuring of the connection between blood and menstruation in the western record made it more difficult to handle large amounts of cross-disciplinary material. Females are stigmatized by menstruation in a patriarchal culture; this stigma may attach to the study of menstruation, and the stigma might have an impact on how this study is received.

One reward for studying menstrual extraction as a philosophic topic was that I applied what I learned in books to help me make meaning of a personal experience. In doing so, I was able to utilize my education in a practical way. The fact that menstrual extraction and high-minded intellectual pursuits initially seemed so distant from one another meant that I could take nothing for granted, an attitude that is highly valuable when engaging in pursuit of speculative philosophy. My fears that menstrual extraction was not a worthy philosophical topic were lessened at some key moments during the later phases of my research when the correspondence between menstrual

extraction and the primal menstrual rituals emerged. The thrill of discovery banished my anxieties.

Future research is indicated.

The astrological relationships to menstrual extraction might prove profitable because of the intimate relationship between the moon and menstrual rituals. The work of Stan Grof, M. D., and Rick Tarnas that explicates the ways that astrological synchronicities during the birth process is reflected in the archetypal relationships of the planets and through the archetypal relationships of the individual psyche might be profitably applied to this material. If menstrual rituals carry messages, maybe the messages are archetypal expressions or maybe they are the archetypes themselves. Future research along these lines is called for.

Follow-up research might take the path of new explorations of incidences of changing blood practices, or of cross-cultural interpretations of rituals, such as tattooing.

Potential Contribution of the Study

Ultimately the results of a work of this type needs to be judged in the context of how well it fits into the academic field from which it comes. Will the course of

western philosophy run red with menstrual blood? Will my menstrual courses start a philosophical rumor?

May the *flow* be with you.

INFORMED CONSENT

I, Laura Brown, am conducting interviews about menstrual extraction as a part of my doctoral research at the California Institute of Integral Studies.

All participation is voluntary. If you decide to participate, I may tape at least one, 1-2 hour interview. I will transcribe the interview. The interview may take the form of an electronic exchange via the Internet.

You are free to withdraw your participation at any time.

You are under no obligation to either be interviewed, or to answer any question you do not want to answer.

The choice of whether to use a pseudonym or your real name is yours (neither way is preferred by me).

Other than my sincere appreciation, there is no compensation attached to the interview, nor do I foresee any material benefit attached to your participation in my study.

The tapes and transcripts of the interviews will be the data of my research. Part or all of your stories may be published. I will cherish these stories. Anything may happen with these stories. I will store the tapes in a locked area. I will destroy them two years after the completion of the dissertation.

If you desire to edit your narrative for any reason, I will respect that wish (and I may note the action in the dissertation).

Should you be interested, I have the name and number of a licensed psychiatrist who is familiar with the study and is available for you.

If you have any conditions or caveats, please list them.

Date _____

I, _____,
consent to participate in this study of menstrual extraction stories conducted by Laura Brown of the

California Institute of Integral Studies. I have read this consent form and have had my questions answered.

_____

Signature

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this research you may contact, anonymously, if you wish—to the Chair, Human Research Review Committee, California Institute of Integral Studies, 1453 Mission Street, San Francisco, CA. 94103, Telephone (415) 575-6100.

Possible Questions:

1. Please describe your relationship to me.

2. Tell me about your experiences with menstrual extraction? Your first SHC? The most significant SHC? (What were the details of your actual experiences, childcare etc.?)

3. Why did you do menstrual extraction?

4. Have you ever had any dreams about menstrual extraction?

5. Why not just call menstrual extraction early abortion?

6. How do you "sum up" the menstrual extraction experience?

7. How did menstrual extraction affect your relationship to your own body?

8. Is menstrual extraction invasive and a denial of nature?

9. Did you ever consider menstrual extraction a practice? A ritual?

10. What did menstrual extraction mean to you?

11. Is there any other story about menstrual extraction that you would like to tell?

Glossary of the Self Help Clinic

abortion - the termination of a pregnancy by purposeful means other than birth; carries intention; implies that a woman knows that she is pregnant; focus is the pregnancy; the natural but premature ending of a pregnancy is a spontaneous abortion..

advanced self-help clinic - on-going self-help group that makes a commitment to the practice of menstrual extraction

cannula - made of polyethylene tubing, having one end closed and two openings on opposing sides near the closed end; coming in varying diameters: 4mm, 5mm are the most commonly used sizes in menstrual extraction (Most women's cervical canal dilates naturally during menstruation to about 4mm.); can be easily crafted at home; a straw like tube which is inserted through the cervical os into the uterus for suctioning its contents.

cervical stabilizer - If it was necessary to grasp the cervix to hold it steady, a modified saw-tooth tenaculum was used. The group modified this tenaculum so that it did not close completely. Attaching the tenaculum around a pipe overnight so it would bend could do this. This modified tool grasped the cervix gently and did not cause any breaks in the mucous membrane. Many groups did not have this tool.

cervix - pink and shiny part of the uterus that extends into the vagina; can usually be felt by a woman by putting a finger into her vagina or can be seen by using a speculum with a mirror and a light; the centerpiece of self-examination.

clitoris - the complex structure that includes the inner lips, the outer lips, hood, shaft and legs, urethral sponge, bulbs, network of nerves, blood vessels, ligaments, erectile tissue, glands, muscles, blood vessels and a variety of other body parts (including but not limited to toes, feet, ears) and more; structurally equivalent to the penis with a different arrangement of parts; a favorite organ of many self-help feminists.

Del-Em™ - self-help device used by advanced self help groups to extract the contents of a woman's uterus, developed in 1971 and patented in 1974 by Lorraine Rothman; sometimes known as the *kit*; consisting of a small

collection bottle with a rubber stopper, plastic tubing, a small (usually 4mm) plastic cannula, a plastic syringe to create suction, and a one-way bypass valve which locks in the pressure and eliminates the possibility of forcing air into the uterus.

egg channel (egg tube) - known in patriarchal circles as the Fallopian Tubes after an Italian anatomist from the middle fifteen hundreds; this is the channel that connects the ovaries with the inside of the uterus.

menstrual cycle - a periodically recurring complex sequence of hormonally-governed events that includes the release of an egg and menstrual bleeding; often depicted as a model of a 28-day cycle even though this model is rarely the way a woman experiences herself; usually the cycle is anywhere from 14 days - several months in duration; a mystery that each woman spends her life reckoning with and reckoning by.

menstrual extraction - removal of some, most or all of the uterine contents by suction on or about the first day of the menstrual period, done by women in self-help groups with a Del-Em™.

menstrual regulation - a term initiated by Harvey Karman, an illegal abortionist, and the Agency for International Development, as a euphemism for early abortion using the abortion kit developed by Karman, consisting of a cannula directly attached to a 50 mm. Syringe with legs which popped out when the syringe was pulled back to brace it so that it would retract, thus forcing material and air through the cannula into the uterus. The kit can only be safely used by someone with training to perform the abortion on the patient, but, in the hands of a skilled, trained person, it is effective and efficient. Like dispensing birth control pills so that withdrawal bleeding would occur each month, simulating normal menstruation, the population controllers hoped to give women the idea that they were just regulating their normal menstrual periods.

menstruation - the periodic sloughing off of the uterine lining which flows through the cervical canal and out through the vagina. The amount of menstrual material and clots can vary considerably from woman to woman and in the same woman from period to period to from a few teaspoonfuls to about three-fourths of a cup; source of power.

os - the opening hole in the middle of the cervix that leads to the cervical canal to the inner os that opens into the uterus; the opening through which the menstrual blood, partially-formed embryos, fetus, babies and pus flows *out* and that sperm, a cannula, an IUD or bacteria go *in*; to the practiced eye the site of much data about the menstrual cycle-sometime smiling, sometimes haloed, sometimes weeping, sometimes dry.

pelvic - a physical examination in which two fingers of one hand of the examiner are inserted into the vagina of the woman being examined to touch (or stabilize or fix or hold steady) the cervix while the abdomen is first pressed just above the pubic hairline with the fingers of the other hand with the objective of feeling the size, shape and position of the uterus, and then the fingers press to each side of the uterus to put pressure on the egg channel and ovaries. Healthy ovaries and egg channels cannot be directly felt, however, when the woman being examined winces with slight pain, the examiner knows she has felt them. An ovary that is enlarged due to the healthy rupturing of an egg mid-cycle or an ovary with many eggs that simultaneously start to mature may be felt at times also.

speculum (vaginal) - an instrument, often plastic, which is inserted into a vagina in order to open the vaginal walls to make the walls, vagina, cervix and os visible.

tissue - uterine contents which can appear stringy, cartilage-like or white colored, and watery-bloody fluid, distinguishable from menstrual material or blood clots which have a gluey consistency; (Sometimes after an abortion or a menstrual extraction a *tag* of tissue stays inside the woman's uterus. This can cause bleeding and infection, presumably because the uterus is trying to force out or flush out the material. If this happens, a second aspiration nearly always removes the *tag*, the uterus contracts, the bleeding stops, and there no further problem.

tubing - used in the Del-Em™; often purchased as aquarium tubing.

uterus - a muscular hollow pear-shaped walnut sized organ with an inner mucous membrane lining. The uterus floats in the pelvic area, sustained by ligaments and muscles designed for the task of deciding which egg/sperm zygotes

shall be nurtured for the potential full nine months of gestation.

vagina - a multi-purpose, moist, elastic passage, often called potential space, with a mucous membrane lining that extends from the cervix to the vulva, usually with the vaginal walls touching each other, sometimes greatly expanded as happens during childbirth; during childbirth called the birth canal; site of much activity, attention and linguist controversy.

villi (chorionic villi) - (plural of villus); distinctive slender hairlike processes or minute projections close set on a surface, whitish and branchlike developing in the uterus about two weeks into a pregnancy, becoming placental tissue in later stages of pregnancy; evidence of a pregnancy when found among the blood and clots of a menstrual. extraction; can be identified by eye by putting the contents of the extracted uterine material into salt water.

woman, [the] - a designation that occurs during the course of a menstrual extraction or in the context of a feminist clinic, the person who is the having the menstrual extraction or in the clinic stetting, an abortion or other medical procedure is called *the woman,* she is the center of the activity.

yogurt trial (yogurt conspiracy) - name popularized by the media to describe the legal prosecution of Practicing Without a License brought against Carol Downer in 1972 in Los Angeles, California that did a great deal to popularize the self-help ideas.

Bibliography

Abortion Rap: Testimony by women who have suffered the consequences of restrictive abortion laws. (1971) (D. Schulder & F. Kennedy, Eds.). New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company.

African Proverbs. (1962) (C. a. W. Leslau, Ed.). Mount Vernon: Peter Pauper Press.

Ahern, E. M. (1975). The power and pollution of Chinese women. In M. Wold & R. Witke (Eds.), *Women and the family in rural Taiwan* (pp. 193-214). Palo Alto: Stanford University Press.

Alice Through the Microscope: The power of science over women's lives. (1980) (Brighton Women and Science Group, Ed.). London: Virago.

Allegro, J. M. (1970). *The Sacred Mushroom & the Cross: Fertility cults and the origins of Judaism and Christianity.* Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc.

Allen, M. R. (1967). *Male Cults and Secret Initiations in Melanesia.* Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.

Amadiume, I. (1987). *Male Daughters, Female Husbands. Gender and Sex in an African Society.* London & New Jersey: Zed Books.

Anthropology and the Study of Religion. (1984) (R. L. Moore & F. E. Reynolds, Eds.). Chicago: Center for the Scientific Study of Religion.

The anthropology of experience. (1986) (E. M. Bruner & V. W. Turner, Eds.). Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Aquinas, S. T. (1948). *Basic Writings of St. Thomas Aquinas* (A. C. Pegis, Ed.). New York: Random House.

Arcana, J. (1979). *Our Mothers' Daughters.* Berkeley: Shameless Hussy Press.

Archaeoastronomy in the New World. (1982) (A. F. Aveni, Ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ardener, E. (1972). Belief and the problem of women. In J. la Fontaine (Ed.), *Essays in honour of A.I. Richards* (pp. 135-158). London: Tavistock.

Ardrey, R. (1966). *The Territorial Imperative: A Personal Inquiry into the Animal Origins of Property and Nations.* New York: Dell Publishing.

Ardrey, R. (1967). *African Genesis.* New York: Dell Publishing.

Aristotle. (1995). *Bollingen Series LXXI. Vol. 1: The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford*

Translation (J. Barnes, Ed.). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Aristotle. (1995). *Bollingen Series LXXI. Vol. 2: The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation* (J. Barnes, Ed.). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Ashley-Montagu, M. F. (1940). Physiology and Origins of the Menstrual Prohibitions. *Quarterly Review of Biology, 15,* 211-220.

Asso, D. (1983). *The Real Menstrual Cycle.* New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Auge, M.. (1982). *The anthropological circle: Symbol, function, history* (M. Thom, Trsans.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Aveni, A. F. (1997). *Stairways to the Stars: Skywatching in Three Great Ancient Cultures.* John Wiley & Sons Inc.

Babcock, B. A. (1978). *The Reversible World: Symbolic inversion in art and society.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Bachofen, J. J. (1967). *Myth, Religion, and Mother Right: Selected Writings of J. J. Bachofen* (R. Manheim, Trans.). Bollingen Series LXXXIV). Princeton and London: Princeton University Press.

Baldwin, J. M. (1996). *Darwin and the Humanities.* Baltimore: Review Publishing.

Baldwin, J. M. (1996). A new factor in evolution. *American Naturalist, 30,* 441-451; 536-553.

Balzer, M. M. (1981). Rituals of gender identity: Markers of Siberian Khanty ethnicity, status and belief. *American Anthropologist, 83,* 850-867.

Barbour, I. G. *Myths, Models and Paradigms.* New York: Harper & Row.

Baring, A. C., Jules. (1991). *The Myth of the Goddess.* New York: Penguin Books.

Barker-Benfield, B. (1972, Summer). The Spermatic Economy : A Nineteenth Century View of Sexuality. *Feminist Studies, 1,* 45-74.

Bartelmez, G. W. (1937). Menstruation. *Physiological Reviews, 17,* 28-72.

Basalla, G. (1988). *The Evolution of Technology.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bateson, G. (1936). *Naven.* Cambridge.

Beals, C. (1961). Sex Life in Latin America. In A. Ellis & A. Abarbanel (Eds.), *The Encyclopedia of Sexual Behavior* (pp. 600-601). New York.

Bearak, B. (2000, Saturday/August). Behind the veil, a Muslim Feminist. *New York Times (New York), National ed.*, sec. International, p. A4.

Bede. (n.d.). *History of the English Church and People.* Baltimore: Penguin.

Beidelman, T. O. (1964). Pig (Guluwe): An Essay on Ngulu Sexual Symbolism and Ceremony. *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology, 20,* 375.

Bell, S. E. (1982). Feminist Self-Help: The Case of Fertility Consciousness/Women Controlled Natural Birth Control Groups. *Radical Teacher, 19,* 17-20.

Benderly, B. (1984). *Thinking About Abortion.* Garden City: Dial Press, Doubleday.

Benedict, R. (1944). *Patterns of Culture.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Benshoff, L., & Thornhill, R. (1979). The evolution of monogamy and concealed ovulation in humans. *Journal of Social and Biological Structures, 2,* 95-106.

Bettelheim, B. (1954). *Symbolic wounds: Puberty rites and the Envious Male.* New York: Collier.

Bhattacharyya, N. N. (1968). *Indian Puberty Rites.* Calcutta.

Bigwood, C. (1993). *Earth Muse: Feminism, Nature, and Art.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Binford, L. R. (1989). Isolating the transition to cultural adaptations: An organizational approach. In E. Trinkaus (Ed.), *The Emergence of Modern Humans: Biocultural adaptations in the later Pleistocene* (pp. 18-41). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bird, C., & Briller, S. W. (1971). *Born Female* (New and Revised). New York: Pocket Book.

Birke, L., & Best, S. (1980). The Tyrannical Womb: Menstruation and the Menopause' in Brighton Women and Science Group. In Brighton Women and Science Group (Ed.), *Alice Through the Microscope.* London: Virago.

Blackmore, S. (1999). *The Meme Machine.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bleir, R. (1984). *Science and gender: A critique of biology and its theories on women.* Elmsford: Pergamon.

Blood Magic: The Anthropology of Menstruation. (1988) (T. Buckley & A. Gottlieb, Eds.). London: University of California Press.

Blundell, S. (1995). *Women in Ancient Greece.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Body/Politics: Women and the Discourses of Science. (1990) (M. Jacobus, E. F. Keller, & S. Shuttleworth, Eds.). New York and London: Routledge.

Bohm, D., Kelly, S., & Morin, E. (1996). Order, Disorder, and the Absolute: An Experiment in Dialogue. *World Futures, 46,* 223-237.

Bolton, R. (1980). Comment on Wreschner: Red ochre and human evolution. *Current Anthropology, 21,* 633-635.

Bookidis, N. (1987). *Demeter and Persephone in Ancient Corinth.* Princeton: American School of Classical Studies at Athens.

Boone, L. P. (1954). The Vernacular of Menstruation. *American Speech, 129,* 297-298.

Borden, C. E. (1976). Reply to Balaji Mundkur, The cult of the serpent in the Americas: Its Asian background. *Current Anthropology, 17,* 441-442.

Bordo, S. (1993). *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body.* Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Boston Women's Health Collective. (1973). *Our Bodies, Ourselves* (Second). New York: Simon and Schuster.

Boyd, R., & Richerson, P. J. (1985). *Culture and the Evolutionary Process.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bradley, A. (1993, January). Abortion don't deny. *Living Marxism, 51,* 51-52.

Briffault, R. (1927). *The Mothers: A study of the origins of sentiments and institutions.* (Vol. II). London: George Allen & Unwin.

Bronowski, J. (1965). *The Identity of Man* (Rev. ed.). (American Museum Science Books, Revised Edition). Garden City: The Natural History Press.

Brooks-Gunn, J., & Ruble, D. N. (1980). The Menstrual Attitude Questionnaire. *Psychosomatic Medicine, 42*(5), 503-511.

Brown, F. A. (1972, November-December). The clocks timing biological rhythms. *American Scientist,* pp. 756-766.

Brown, J. K. (1963). A Cross-cultural Study of Female Initiation Rites. *American Anthropologist, 65,* 947.

Brown, N. O. (1966). *Love's Body.* New York: Random House.

Brumfield, A. C. (1981). *The Attic Festivals of Demeter and Their Relation to the Agricultural Year.* Salem: Arno Press.

Bruner, J. (1990). *Acts of meaning.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Bryant, J. A., Healthcote, D., & Pickles, V. (1977, April). The search for "menotoxin." *The Lancet, 2,* 753.

Budiansky, S. (1986, December 1). Siren Song of the Pheromones. *U.S. News and World Report,* 64.

Bullough, V., & Voght, M. (1973). Women, Menstruation and Nineteenth Century Medicine. *Bulletin of the History of Medicine, 47,* 66-83.

Burkert, W., Girard, R., & Smith, J. Z. (1987). *Violent Origins. Ritual killing and cultural formation.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Burkert, W. (1983). *Homo Necans: Anthropology of Ancient Greek Scientific Ritual and Myths* (P. Bing, Trans.). Berkeley: University of California Press.

Bynum, C. W. (1984). Women's stories, women's symbols: A critique of Victor Turner's theory of liminality. In R. L. Moore & F. E. Reynolds (Eds.), *Anthropology and the Study of Religion* (pp. 105-125). Chicago: Center for the Scientific Study of Religion.

Bynum, C. W. (1988). *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Caillois, R. (1939). *L'Homme et le sacre.* Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

Cameron, A. (1984). *Daughters of Copper Woman.* London: The Women's Press.

Campbell, D. T. (1975). Evolutionary epistemology. In P. A. Schlipp (Ed.), *The Philosophy of Karl Popper* (pp. 413-463). La Salle: Open Court Publishing.

Campbell, D. T. (1975). On the conflicts between biological and social evolution and between psychology and moral tradition. *American Psychologist, 30,* 1103-1126.

Carney, M. W. P. (1981, April). Menstrual Disturbance: A Psychogenic Disorder? *Clinics in Obstetrics and Gynaecology, 8*(1), 103-109.

Carrithers, M. (1990). Why humans have cultures. *Man, (N. S.) 25,* 189-206.

Cassidy-Brinn, G., R.N., Hornstein, F., Downer, C., & Federation of Feminist Women's Health Centers. (1984). *Woman-Centered Pregnancy and Birth.* Pittsburgh: Cleis Press.

Cassirer, E. (1944). *An Essay on Man* (R. Manheim, Trans.). New Haven.

Cassirer, E. (1953-1957). *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* (R. Manheim, Trans.) (Vol. 3 volumes). New Haven.

Cavalli-Sforza, L., Menozzi, P., & Piazza, A. (1994). *The History and Geography of Human Genes* (Abridged Paperback Edition). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Cavalli-Sforza, L. L., & Cavalli-Sforza, F. (1995). *The Great Human Diasporas: The History of Diversity and*

Evolution (S. Thorne, Trans.). Menlo Park: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc.

Cavalli-Sforza, Feldman, L., & Feldman, M. W. (1981). *Cultural Transmission and Evolution.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Cazeneuve, J. (1958). *Les rites et la condition humaine.* Paris.

Center for Archaeoastronomy. (1978). *Archaeoastronomy 1.* College Park: University of Maryland Press.

Chadwick, M. (1932). *The Psychological Effects of Menstruation.* New York: Nervous & Mental Disease.

Chalker, R. (2000). *The Clitoral Truth.* New York: Seven Stories Press.

Chalmers, D. J. (1995). The Puzzle of Conscious Experience. *Mysteries of the Mind, 30-36.*

Chase, S. E. (1995). Taking Narrative Seriously: Consequences for Method and Theory in Interview Studies. In R. Josselson & A. Lieblich (Eds.), *Interpreting Experience: The Narrative Study of Lives* (pp. 1-25). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Cheney, D. L., & Seyfarth, R. M. (1985). Social and non-social knowledge in vervet monkeys. In I. Weiskrantz (Ed.), *Animal Intelligence* (pp. 187-202). Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Chern, M. M., Gatewood, L. C., & Anderson, V. E. (1980). *The Menstrual Cycle* (Dan et al, Ed.) (Vol. 1). New York: Springer.

The Chicago Manual of Style: The Essential Guide for Writers, Editors, and Publishers. (Fourteenth Edition). (1993). Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

Chicago, J. (1977). *Through The Flower: My struggle as a woman artist.* Garden City: Anchor Books.

Child, A. B., & Child, I. L. (1985). Biology, ethnocentrism and sex differences. *American Anthropologist, 87,* 125-128.

Clare, A., W. (1985). Hormones, Behavior, and the Menstrual Cycle. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research, 29*(2), 225-233.

Clark, H. J. P. (1983). *Women Coming On: Menstruation and Self Definition.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Liverpool University.

Clark, J. D. (1981). New men, strange faces, other minds': An archaeologist's perspective on recent discoveries relating to the origins and spread of Modern Man. *Proceedings of the British Academy, 67,* 163-192.

Cloak, F. T. (1975). Is cultural ethnology possible? *Human Ecology, 3,* 161-182.

Cloudsley, T. L. (1961). *Rhythmic activity in animal physiology and behavior.* New York: Academic Press.

Code, L. (1991). *What Can She Know: Feminist Theory and the Construction of Knowledge.* Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.

Cohen, S. (1969). Theories of myth. *Man, (N.S.) 4,* 337-353.

Collins, D. (1976). *The Human Revolution.* Oxford: Phaidon.

Contemporary Sexual Behavior: Critical issues in the 1970s. (1973) (J. Zubin & J. Money, Eds.). Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Cooper, A., & Kessell, N. (1963). Menstruation and Personality. *British Journal of Psychiatry, 109,* 711-721.

Corea, G. (1977). *The Hidden Malpractice: How American Medicine Treats Women as Patients and Professionals.* New York: William Morrow.

Cott, N. F. (1977). *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Crane, G. R. e. (1998-1999, December-January). *Perseus Project* (Data Base). .

Crawford, M., & Marsh, D. (1989). *The Driving Force.* London: Heinemann.

Crawford, P. (1981). Attitudes to Menstruation in 17th Century England. *Past and Present, 91,* 47-73.

Crawley, E. (1902). *The Mystic Rose: A study of Primitive marriage and of primitive thought in its bearing on marriage.* London: Methuen.

Creswell, J. W. (1994). *Research Design: Qualitative & Quantitative Approaches.* Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Creswell, J. W. (1997). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Traditions.* Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Criss, T. B., & Marcum, J. P. (1981). A lunar effect on fertility. *Sexual Biology, 28,* 67-93.

Culpepper, E. E. (1979). Exploring Menstrual Attitudes. In R. Hubbard, M. S. Henefin & B. Fried (Eds.), *Women looking at Biology looking at Women.* Cambridge: Shenckman Publishing Co.

Cultural Models in Language and Thought. (1987) (D. Holland & N. Quinn, Eds.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Culver, R., Rotton, J., & Kelly, I. W. (1988). Moon mechanisms and myths: A critical appraisal of

explanations of purported lunar effects on human behavior. *Psychological Reports, 62,* 683-710.

Cutler, W. B. (1980). Luna and menstrual phase locking. *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology, 137,* 834-839.

Dalton, K. (1969). *The Menstrual Cycle.* Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Daly, M. (1974). *Beyond God the Father.* Boston: Beacon Press.

Dan, A. J., Grahm, E. A., & Beecher, C. P. (1980). *The Menstrual Cycle. Vol. 1: A Synthesis of Interdisciplinary Research.* New York: Springer.

Darwin, C. *The Origin of the Species By Means of Natural Selection or the Preservation of Favored Races in the Struggle for Life and The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex.* New York: Bennett A. Cerf Donald S. Klopfer.

Darwin, C. (1969). *The Autobiography of Charles Darwin (1809-1882)* (N. Barlow, Ed.) [With original omissions restored]. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

Davis, E. G. (1972). *The First Sex.* Baltimore: Penguin.

Davis, G. (1974, June). "Menstrual toxin" and human fertility. *The Lancet, 8,* 1172-1173.

Davis, N. Z. (1984, November). *Ritual, antistructure and historian's order.* Presented at the 83rd Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association, Denver.

Dawkins, R. (1982). *The Selfish Gene.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dawkins, R. (1996). *Climbing Mount Improbable.* New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.

de Beauvoir, S. (1974). *The Second Sex* (H. M. Parshley, Trans.). New York: Vintage Books.

de Quincey, C. (2000). *Radical Nature: Consciousness All the Way Down.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, California Institute of Integral Studies, Philosophy and Religion.

Deacon, T. (1997). *The Symbolic Species: The Co-evolution of Language and the Human Brain.* London: Penguin.

Delaney, J., Lupton, M. J., & Toth, E. (1988). *The Curse: A Cultural History of Menstruation* [Revised; Expanded Edition]. New York: Dutton.

Dennerstein, L., & Burrows, G. D. (1983). Hormones and Female Sexuality. In L. Dennerstein & M. de Senarclens (Eds.), *The Young Woman: Psychosomatic Aspects of Obstetrics and Gynecology.* Amsterdam/New York: Elsevier Scientific Publishers.

Dennett, D. C. (1991). *Consciousness Explained.* New York: Penguin Books.
Dennett, D. C. (1995). *Darwin's Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meanings of Life.* New York: Simon & Schuster.
Deslange, L. (1904). *Le Plateau Central Nigérian.* Paris.
Deslauriers, D. (1992, Spring). Dimensions of Knowing: Narrative, Paradigm, and Ritual. *ReVision, 14*(4), 187-193.
Deslauriers, D., & Cordts, J. (1995). Dreams and Current Concerns: A Narrative Co-Constitutive Approach. *Dreaming, 5*(4), 247-264.
Deutsch, H. (1944). *The Psychology of Women.* (Vol. 2). New York: Grune.
Devereux, G. (1950). The Psychology of Feminine Genital Bleeding. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis, 31,* 242-243.
Devereux, G. (1977). A Typological Study of Abortion in 350 Primitive, Ancient, and Pre-industrial Societies. In H. Rosen (Ed.), *Abortion in America* (p. 98). Boston: Beacon Press.
Diamond, J. (1997). *Guns, Germs, and Steel.* London: Cape.
Douglas, M. (1966). *Purity and danger: An analysis of concepts of pollution and taboo.* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
Douglas, M. (1970). *Natural Symbols.* London: Barrie & Rockliff.
Douglas, M. (1975). *Implicit Meanings.* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
Douglas, M. (1982). *In the Active Voice.* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
Downer, C. (Executive Producer). *No Going Back.* San Diego.
Dreifus, C. (1970). Women's Lib Hits The Courts: The Great Abortion Suit. In S. Stambler (Ed.), *Women's Liberation: Blueprint for the Future.* New York: Ace Books.
Durham, W. H. (1991). *Coevolution; Genes, Culture, and Human Diversity.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.
Durkheim, E. (1897). La prohibition de l'inceste et ses origines. *L'Année Sociologique, 1,* 1-70.
Durkheim, E. (1963). *Incest: The Nature and Origin of the Taboo.* New York: Lyle Stuart.
Durkheim, E. (1915). *The elementary forms of the religious life* (J. W. Swain, Trans.). London: George Allen & Unwin.
Eakins, P. S. (1984, Winter). The Rise of the Free Standing Birth Center: Principles and Practices. *Women and Health, 9,* 49-63.

Eccles, A. (1982). *Obstetrics & Gynecology in Tudor and Stuart England.* London: Croom Helm.

Ehrenreich, B., & English, D. *Witches, Midwives, and Nurses: A History of Women Healers.*

Ehrenreich, B., & English, D. (1978). *For Her Own Good: 150 Years of the Experts' Advice to Women.* New York: Doubleday.

Eisler, R. (1996). *Sacred Pleasure: Sex, Myth, and the Politics of the Body--New Paths to power and Love.* San Francisco: HarperCollins.

Eliade, M. (1956). *The Forge and the Crucible: The Origins and Structures of Alchemy.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Eliade, M. (1959). *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (W. Trask, Trans.). San Diego: Harcort Brace Jovanovich.

Eliade, M. (1971). *The Myth of the Eternal Return or Cosmos and History* (W. Trask, Trans.). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Eliade, M. (1977). *Myths, Dreams & Mysteries: The Encounter Between Contemporary Faiths and Archaic Reality* (P. Mairet, Trans.). Collins.

Eliade, M. (1982). *A History of Religious Ideas: From Gautama Buddha to the Triumph of Christianity* (W. R. Trask, Trans.) (Vol. 2). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Eliade, M. (1991). *Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism* (P. Mairet, Trans.). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Ellis, H. (1901-1929). *Studies in the Psychology of Sex.* (Vol. I). Philadelphia.

Ellis, H. (1913). Love and Pain. In *Studies in the Psychology of Sex.* Philadelphia: F. A. Davis.

Ernster, V. L. (1975). American Menstrual Expressions. *Sex Roles, 1*(1).

European women: A documentary history, 1789-1945. (1980) (E. S. Riemer & J. C. Fout, Eds.). Brighton: Schocken Books.

Evolutionary Biology and Human Social Behavior. (1979) (N. Chagnon & W. Irons, Eds.). North Scituate: Duxbury Press.

Faludi, S. (1991). *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women.* New York: Doubleday.

Fantham, E., Foley, H. P., Kampen, N. B., Pomeroy, S. B., & Shapiro, H. A. (1994). *Women in the Classical World.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Fausto-Sterling, A. (1985). *Myths of gender: Biological theories about women and men.* New York: Basic Books.

Federation of Feminist Women's Health Centers. (1986). *How To Stay Out of The Gynecologist's Office* (C. Downer, R. Chalker, & L. Rothman, Eds.) (10 Year Anniversary Edition). Hollywood: Woman to Woman Publications.

Federation of Feminist Women's Health Centers. (1991). *A New View of a Woman's Body: A Fully Illustrated Guide* (10th ed.). West Hollywood: Feminist Health Press.

The Female Body in Western Culture: Contemporary Perspectives. (1985) (S. R. Suleiman, Ed.). Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Feminism and World Religions. (1999) (A. Sharma & K. K. Young, Eds.). Albany: State University of New York Press.

Fenichel, O. (1945). *The Psychoanalytic Theory of Neuroses.* New York: Norton.

Fingarette, H. F. (1972). *Confucius--The Secular as Sacred.* New York: Harper & Row.

Firth, R. (1973). *Symbols: Public and private.* Ithaca: Cornell University.

Flaceliere, R. (1965). *Daily Life in Greece at the time of Pericles.* New York: Macmillan.

Fluhmann, F. C. (1939). *Menstrual Disorders: Pathology, Diagnosis and Treatment.* Philadelphia; London: Saunders.

Fontanus, N. (1652). *The Woman's Doctor: Or an exact and distinct Explanation of all such Diseases as are peculiar to that Sex with Choice and Experimental Remedies against the same.*

Fontenrose, J. (1959). *Python. A study of Delphic myth and its origin.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Forster, M. (1984). *Significant Sisters: The Grassroots of active Feminism 1839-1939.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Foucault, M. (1973). *The Order Of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences.* New York: Vintage Books.

Foucault, M. (1980). *The History of Sexuality* (R. Hurley, Trans.) (Vol. I: An Introduction). New York: Vintage Books.

Fox, R. (1975). *Encounter with Anthropology.* New York: Dell Publishing.

Francia, L. (1988). *Dragontime.* Woodstock: Ash Tree Publishing.

Francome, C. (1984). *Abortion Freedom: A Worldwide Movement.* London: George Allen & Unwin.

Frankfort, E. (1972). *Vaginal Politics.* New York: Bantam Books.

Frazer, S. J. G. (1963). *Abridged. Vol. 1: The Golden Bough.* New York: Macmillan.

Freeman, J. (1975). *The Politics of Women's Liberation: A Case Study of an Emerging Social Movement and Its Relation to the Policy Process.* New York: David McKay.

Freeman, W., & Looney (1934). Studies on the Phytotoxic Index II. Menstrual Toxin ('menotoxin'). *Journal of Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics, 52.*

Freud, S. (1919). *Totem and Taboo.* New York: Dodd, Mean.

Freud, S. (1961). *The Complete Psychological Works* (J. Strachey, Trans.) (Vol. 1). London: Hogarth.

Friedman, R., C., Hurt, S. W., Aronoff, M. S., & Clarkin, J. (1980). Behavior and the Menstrual Cycle. In C. R. Stimpson & E. S. Person (Eds.), *Women: Sex and Sexuality* (pp. 192-211). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Frisbie, C. (1967). *Kinaalda: A Study of the Navaho Girl's Puberty Ceremony.* Middletown: Wesleyan University Press.

Frost, F. J. (1987). *Greek Society.* Lexington: D.C. Heath and Company.

Gadamer, H.-G. (1993). *Reason in the Age of Science* (G. G. Lawrence, Trans.). Cambridge and London: The MIT Press.

Gadon, E. (1989). *The Once and Future Goddess.* San Francisco: HarperSan Francisco.

Gall, C. (2000, Tuesday, August 15). *New York Times (New York), National Edition,* sec. International, p. A7.

Galper, M. G., & Washburne, C. C. (1976, March-April). A Women's Self-Help Program in Action. *Social Policy,* p. 48.

Gannon, L. (1981). Evidence for a Psychological Etiology of Menstrual Disorders -- A Critical Review. *Psychological Reports, 48*(1), 287-293.

Ganong, W. F. (1975). *Review of Medical Physiology* (7th ed.). Los Altos: Lange Medical Publications.

Gartner, A. (1985, Winter). A Typology of Women's Self-Help Groups. *Social Policy,* 25-30.

Gauquelin, M. (1969). *The Cosmic Clocks: From Astrology to a Modern Science.* London: Peter Owen.

Gebser, J. (1962). *In der Bewahrung.* Berne: Francke.

Gebser, J. (1968). *Asien lachelt anders Asia Smiles Differently.* Frankfurt and Berlin: Ullstein.

Gebser, J. (1970). *The Invisible Origin - Der unsichbare Ursprung.* Olten: Walter.

Gebser, J. (1975-1981). (Vol. 8 volumes). Schaffhausen: Novalis.
Gebser, J. (1985). *The Ever-Present Origin* (N. Barstad & A. Mickunas, Trans.). Athens: Ohio University Press.
Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures.* New York: Basic Books.
Gennep, A. v. (1960). *The Rites of Passage.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development.* Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press.
Gimbutas, M. (1991). *The Language of the Goddess.* San Francisco: Harper Collins.
Gluckman, M. (1962). Les Rites de Passage. In M. Gluckman (Ed.), *Essays on the Ritual of Social Relations.* Manchester: Manchester University Press.
Goldman, E. (1970). *Living My Live* (Vol. 1, pp. 57-61). New York: Peter Smith.
Golub, S. (1981). Sex differences in Attitudes and Beliefs Regarding Menstruation. In P. Komnenich, M. McSweeney, J. A. Noack & N. Elder (Eds.), *The Menstrual Cycle* (Vol. 2). New York: Springer.
Golub, S. (1992). *Periods: From Menarche to Menopause.* Newbury Park: Sage Publications.
Goodwin, B. (1994). *How the Leopard Changed Its Spots: The Evolution of Complexity.*
Gould Davis, E. (1971). *The First Sex.* Harmondsworth: Penguin.
Gould, S. J. (1996). *Full House.* New York: Harmony Books.
Grafstein, R. (1981). Menstruation and Sexuality: An Attitudinal Study. *Canadian Women's Studies, 3 Part 2,* 14-16.
Graham, C., & McGrew, W. (1980). Menstrual synchrony in female undergraduates living on a coeducational campus. *Psychoneuroendocrinology, 3,* 245-252.
Grahn, J. R. (1999). *Are Goddesses Metaformic Constructs? An Application of Metaformic Theory to Menarche Celebrations and Goddess Rituals of Kerala, South India.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, California Institute of Integral Studies, Integral Studies: Concentration in Women's Spirituality.
Grahn, J. (1971). *Edward the dyke and other poems.* Oakland: The Women's Press Collective.
Grahn, J. (1978). *Work of the Common Woman.* Oakland: Diana Press.
Grahn, J. (1982). From Sacred Blood to the Curse and Beyond. In C. Spretnak (Ed.), *The Politics of Women's*

Spirituality: Essays on the Rise of Spiritual Power within the Feminist Movement. Garden City: Anchor Press.

Grahn, J. (1994). *Blood, Bread, and Roses: How Menstruation Created the World*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Graves, R. (1974). *The White Goddess* (Amended and Enlarged Edition). New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Greer, G. (1970). *The Female Eunuch*. London: MacGibbon and Kee.

Griaule, M. (1980). *Conversations with Ogotemmeli: An Introduction to Dogon Religious Ideas*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Grof M. D., S. (1985). *Beyond the Brain: Birth, Death, and Transcendence in Psychotherapy*. Albany: State University of New York.

Grof M. D., S. (1998, October-December). Human Nature and the Nature of Reality: Conceptual Challenges from Consciousness Research. *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs, 30*(4), 348.

Gruba, G. H., & Rohrbargh, M. (1975). MMPI correlates of menstrual distress. *Psychosomatic Medicine, 37*, 265-273.

Hage, P., & Hararay, F. (1981, September). Pollution beliefs in Highland New Guinea. *Man, 16*(3).

Hallet, J.-P., & Pelle, A. (1975). *Pygmy Kitabu*. Greenwich: Fawcett Publications, Inc.

Hammond, D., & Jablow, A. (1976). *Women in cultures of the world*. Menlo Park: Benjamin Cummings.

Handbook of Psychosomatic Obstetrics and Gynecology. (1983) (L. Dennerstein & G. D. Burrows, Eds.). Amsterdam/New York: Elsevier.

Haraway, D. (1989). *Primate Visions: Gender, race and nature in the world of modern science*. New York: Routledge.

Haraway, D. (1990). Investment Strategies for the evolving Portfolio of Primate Females. In M. Jacobus, E. F. Keller & S. Shuttleworth (Eds.), *Body/Politics: Women and the Discourses of Science* (pp. 139-162). New York: Routledge.

Harrell, B. B. (1981). Lactation and Menstruation in Cultural Perspective. *American Anthropologist, 83*(4), 823.

Harris, M. (1977). *Cannibals and kings: The origins of cultures*. New York: Random House.

Harrison, M. (1984). *Self-help for premenstrual syndrome*. Cambridge: Matrix Press.

Hauser, M. D. (1988). Invention and social transmission: New data from wild vervet monkeys. In R. Byrne & A. Whitten (Eds.), *Machiavellian Intelligence. Social expertise and the evolution of intellect in monkeys, apes, and humans* (pp. 237-343). Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Hays, H. R. (1963). *In the Beginnings*. New York.

Hays, H. R. (1964). *The Dangerous Sex: The Myth of Feminine Evil*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons.

Hegel, G. W. F. (1998). *The Hegel Reader* (S. Houlgate, Ed.). Malden: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

Henley, N. (1977). *Body Politics*. New Jersey: Prentice hall.

Highwater, J. (1991). *Myth & Sexuality*. New York: Meridian Books.

Highwater, J. (1994). *The Language of Vision: Meditations on*. New York: Grove Press.

Hogbin, I. A. (1970). *The Island of Menstruating Men*. Scranton, London & Toronto: Chandler.

The Homeric Hymn to Demeter: Translation, Commentary, and Interpretive Essays. (1994) (H. P. Foley, Ed. & Trans). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Honan, W. H. (2000, Tuesday, August 22). History of Medical Art Gets Pre-Columbian Chapter. *New York Times (New York), National ed.*, sec. Science, p. D5.

hooks, b. (1984). *Feminist Theory from margin to center*. Boston: South End Press.

Horney, K. (1967). *Feminine Psychology*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co.

Hornstein, F. (1974, Summer). An Interview on Women's Health Politics [Part2]. *Quest, 2*, 27-36.

Hornstein, F. (1974, Fall). An Interview on Women's Health Politics [Part 1]. *Quest: A Feminist Quarterly, 1*, 75-76.

Houppert, K. (1999). *The Curse: Confronting the Last Unmentionable Taboo: Menstruation*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Howell, M. (1974, August). What Medical Schools teach about Women. *New England Journal of Medicine, 291*, 304-307.

Hubbard, R., Henefin, M. S., & Fried, B. (1979). *Women looking at Biology looking at Women*. Schenkman Publishing Company.

Hubert, H., & Mauss, M. (1964). *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Function* (W. D. Halls, Trans.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Huizinga, J. (1950). *Homo Ludens*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Hull, D. L. (1982). The naked meme. In H. C. Plotkin (Ed.), *Learning, Development, and Culture* (pp. 273-327). London: Wiley.

Hull, D. L. (1988). Interactors versus vehicles. In H. C. Plotkin (Ed.), *The Role of Behavior in Evolution* (pp. 19-50). Cambridge: MIT Press.

Hull, D. L. (1988). A mechanism and its metaphysic: An evolutionary account of the social and conceptual development of science. *Biology and Philosophy, 3,* 123-155.

The Human Revolution: Behavioral and biological perspectives on the origins of modern humans. (1989) (P. Mellars & C. Stringer, Eds.). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Huston, J. (Director). (1951). *African Queen.*

Hutton, W. (1942). *Taboo, A Sociological Study.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Interpreter's Bible. (1953) (N. B. Harmon, Ed.). New York: Abingdon.

Interpreting Women's Lives: Feminist Theory and Personal Narratives. (1989) (Personal Narratives Group, Ed.). Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Irigaray, L. (1985). *This Sex Which Is Not One* (C. Proter, Trans.). Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Irigaray, L. (1989). *Speculum of the Other Woman* (G. C. Gill, Trans.). Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Irigaray, L. (1993). *Je, tu, nous: Toward a Culture of Difference* (A. Martin, Trans.). New York: Routledge.

Irigaray, L. (1996). *I Love To You: Sketch for a Felicity Within History* (A. Martin, Trans.). New York: Routledge.

Iverson, P. (1981). *The Navajo Nation.* Albuquerque: University Of New Mexico Press.

Jackson, B. (1992). Black women's responses to menarche and menopause. In A. Dan, J. & L. L. Lewis (Eds.), *Menstrual health in women's lives* (pp. 178-190). Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Jayakar, P. (1990). *The Earth Mother: Legends, Goddesses, and Ritual Arts of India.* New York: Harper & Row.

Jaynes, J. (1990). *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Jeanmarie, H. (1939). *Courai et Courettes.* Lille: Bibliothèque Universitaire.

Jenett, D. E. (1999). *Red Rice for Bhagavati/Cooking for Kannaki: An Ethnographic/Organic Inquiry of the*

Pongola Ritual At Attukal Temple, Kerala, South India. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, California Institute of Intergral Studies, Consciousness and Transformation.

Jensen, A. E. (1962). *Myth and Cult among Primitive Peoples.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Joffe, N. F. (1948). The Vernacular of Menstruation. *Word, 4,* 181-186.

Johnson, M. (1981). *Philosophical Perspectives on Metaphor.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Johnson, M. (1987). *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Reason and Imagination.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Jung, C. G. (1958). *Psyche & Symbol: A Selection from the Writings of C. G. Jung* (V. S. de Laszlo, Ed.) (C. Baynes & F. C. R. Hull, Trans.). New York: Anchor Books.

Jung, C. G. (1961). *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology* (R. F. C. Hull, Trans.). Cleveland and New York: Meridian Books.

Jung, C. G. (1968). *Man and His Symbols* (M.-L. Von Franz, J. L. Henderson, J. Jacobi, & A. Jaffe, Eds.). New York: Dell Publishing.

Jung, C. G. (1969). *On the Nature of the Psyche* (R. R. C. Hull, Trans.). Bollingen Series). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Jung, C. G. (1971). *Bollingen Series XX. Vol. 17: Psychology and Education* (R. F. C. Hull, Trans.). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Jung, C. G. (1973). *Bollingen. Vol. II: Answer to Job* (R. F. C. Hull, Trans.). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Jung, C. G. (1973). *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (A. Jaffe, Ed.) (R. a. C. Winston, Trans.). New York: Vintage Books.

Jung, C. G. (1973). *Synchronicity: An Acausal Connection Principle* (R. F. C. Hull, Trans.). Bollingen Series). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Jung, C. G. (1974). *Bollingen Series XX. Vol. 16: The Psychology of the Transference* (R. F. C. Hull, Trans.). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Jung, C. G. (1976). *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung. Vol. 5: Symbols of Transformations* (S. H. Read, M. Fordham, M. D., G. Adler, PH. D., & W. McGuire, executive editor, Eds.) (R. F. C. Hull, Trans.). *Bollingen Series XX.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Jung, C. G. (1982). *Aspects of the Feminine* (R. F. C. Hull, Trans.). Bollingen Series XX). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Jung, C. G. (1983). *Bollingen Series XX. Vol. 13: Alchemical Studies* (R. F. C. Hull, Trans.). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Jung, C. G. (1989). *Bollingen Series XX. Vol. 14: Mysterium Coniunctionis* (R. F. C. Hull, Trans.). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Jung, C. G. (1990). *Bollingen Series XX. Vol. 9, Part I: The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* (R. F. C. Hull, Trans.). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Jung, C. G. (1993). *Bollingen Series. Vol. 12: Psychology and Alchemy* (R. F. C. Hull, Trans.). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Kaufert, P. A. (1986). Menstruation and menstrual change: Women in midlife. *Health Care for Women International, 7*(1-2), 63-70.

Kay, M. A. (1981). *The Menstrual Cycle* (P. Komnenich, M. McSweeney, J. A. Noack, & N. Elder, Eds.) (Vol. 2). New York: Springer.

Keesing, R. M. (1974). Theories of culture. *American Review of Anthropology, 3*, 73-97.

Keesing, R. M. (1985). Conventional metaphors and anthropological metaphysics: Problematic of cultural translation. *Journal of Anthropological Research, 41*, 201-218.

Keller, C. (1986). *From a Broken Web*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Keller, M. L. (1988). The Eleusinian Mysteries of Demeter and Persephone: Fertility, Sexuality, and Rebirth. *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion, 4*(1), 27-54.

Kelly, S. (1991). Beyond Materialism and Idealism: Reflections on the Work of David Bohm and Edgar Morin. *Idealistic Studies*, pp. 28-38.

Kerenyi, C. (1967). *Eleusis: Archetypal Image of Mother and Daughter* (R. Manheim, Trans.). New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Keuls, E. C. (1985). *The Reign of the Phallus: Sexual Politics in Ancient Athens*. New York: Harper & Row.

Kingston, B. (1980). *Lifting the Curse*. London: Ebury Press.

Kitahara, M. (1982). Menstrual taboos and the importance of hunting. *American Anthropologist, 84*, 901-903.

Klauser, H. A. (1987). *Writing on Both Sides of the Brain*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.

Kline, J. T. (1990). *Interdisiplinarity: History, Theory, & Practice.* Detroit: Wayne State University Press.

Kline, S. J. (1995). *Conceptual Foundations for Multi-Disciplinary Thinking.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Knight, C. D. (1983). Levi-Strauss and the dragon: *Mythologiques* reconsidered in the light of Australian Aboriginal myth. *Man (N. S.), (N. S.) 18,* 21-50.

Knight, C. D. (1984). Correspondence: Snakes and dragons. *Man, 19,* 150-157.

Knight, C. D. (1985). Menstruation as medicine. *Social Science & Medicine, 21,* 671-783.

Knight, C. D. (1987). *Menstruation and the origins of culture. A reconsideration of Levi-Strauss's work on symbolism and myth.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of London.

Knight, C. (1991). *Blood Relations: Menstruation and the Origins of Culture.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Koedt, A. (1970). The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm. In L. Tanner, B. (Ed.), *Voices from Women's Liberation.* New York: The New American Library, Inc.

Koeske, R., & Koeske, G. (1975). An Attributional Approach to Moods and the Menstrual Cycle. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 31*(3), 473-478.

Koff, E. (1983). Through the looking glass of menarche: What the adolescent girl sees. In S. Golub (Ed.), *Menarche* (pp. 77-86). Lexington: D. C. Health.

Koff, E., Rierdan, J., & Jacobson, S. (1981). The personal and interpersonal significance of menarche. *Journal of the American Academy of Child Psychiatry, 14*(6), 148-158.

Koff, E., Rierdan, J., & Silverstone, E. (1978). Changes in representation of body image as a function of menarcheal status. *Developmental Psychology, 14*(6), 635642.

Koran. (1993) (J. M. Rodwell, Trans.). New York: Ivy Books.

Krips, H. (1999). *Fetish: An Exotics of Culture.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Kuhn, T. S. (1996). *The Structures of Scientific Revolutions (3rd ed.).* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Kupfermann, J. (1979). *The MsTaken Body.* St. Albans: Granada.

Lakoff, G. (1990). *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind.* Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors We Live By.* Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1999). *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought.* New York: Basic Books, A Member of the Perseus Books Group.

Lakoff, G., & Turner, M. (1980). *More than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor.* Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

Lamp, F. (1988). Heavenly Bodies: Menses, Moon, and Rituals of License among the Temne of Sierra Leone. In T. Buckley & A. Gottlieb (Eds.), *Blood Magic: The Anthropology of Menstruation* (pp. 210-231). London: University of California Press.

Lander, L. (1988). *Images of bleeding.* New York: Orlando Press.

LaPin, D. (1983). *Astronomy and lunar ritual among the Ngas of Nigeria.* Presented at the First International Conference on Ethnoastronomy, Washington D.C.

Larsen, V. L. (1963). Psychological study of colloquial menstrual expressions. *Northwest Medicine, 62,* 874-877.

Laughlin, K., & Wong, E. (1999). Feminism and/in Taoism. In A. Sharma & K. K. Young (Eds.), *Feminism in World Religions* (pp. 148-178). Albany: State University of New York Press.

Lawrence, D. L. (1982). Reconsidering the Menstrual Taboo: A Portuguese Case. *Anthropological Quarterly, 55*(2), 84-89.

Laws, S. (1990). *Issues of Blood: The Politics of Menstruation.* Hampshire; London: THE MACMILLIAN PRESS LTD.

Leach, E. (1954). *Political Systems of Highland Burma.* London: Bell.

Leach, E. (1976). *Culture and communication: The logic by which symbols are connected; an introduction to the use of structuralist analysis in social anthropology.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Leacock, E. (1978). Women's status in egalitarian society: Implications for social evolution. *Current Anthropology, 19,* 247-255.

Leakey, R. (1981). *The Making of Mankind.* New York: E. P. Dutton.

Leakey, R. (1994). *The Origin of Humankind.* New York: BasicBooks.

Learning, Development and Culture: Essays in Evolutionary Epistemology. (1982) (H. C. Plotkin, Ed.). Chichester: Wiley.

Leary, W. L. (2000, Wednesday/September 13). Found: Possible Pre-Flood Artifacts. *New York Times (New York), National ed.,* p. A8.

Lee, J., & Sasser-Coen, J. (1996). *Blood Stories: Menarche and the Politics of the Female Body in Contemporary U. S. Society.* New York: Routledge.

Lee, R. B. (1988). Reflections on primitive communism. In T. Ingold, D. Riches & J. Woodburn (Eds.), *Hunters and Gatherers. 1: History, Evolution and social Change* (pp. 252-268). Chicago: Adeline.

Lee, R. (1984, November). Blood, Blood, Glorious Blood. *Workers Educational Association Women's Studies Newsletter, n.s. 2,* 8.

Leo, J. (1986, December 1). The Hidden Power of Body Odors. *Time,* 67.

Leuzinger, E. (1967). The Art of Africa. In *Art of the World* (A. E. Keep, Dr. Phil., Trans.). New York: Crown Publishers.

Levi-Strauss, C. . (1963). *Structural Anthropology* (C. Jacobson & B. S. Schoepf, Trans.). New York: Basic Books.

Levi-Strauss, C. . (1970). *The raw and the cooked: Introduction to a science of mythology* (J. Weightman & D. Weightman, Trans.) (Vol. 1). London: Jonathan Cape.

Levitt, E., & Lubin, B. (1967). Some personality factors associated with menstrual complaints and menstrual attitudes. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research, 11,* 267--270.

Lewis, G. (1980). *Day of Shining Red.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lieblich, A., Tuval-Mashiach, R., & Zilber, T. (1998). *Applied Social Research Methods Series.* (Vol. 47). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Lifting the curse of menstruation: A feminist appraisal of the influence of menstruation on women's lives. (1985) (S. Golub, Ed.). New York: Harrington Park Press.

Lincoln, B. (1977). Two Notes on Modern Rituals. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion, 45,* 152-155.

Lincoln, B. (1981). *Emerging from the Chrysalis: Studies in Rituals of Women's Initiation.* Cambridge; London: Harvard University Press.

Lincoln, V. (1967). *A Private Disgrace: Lizzie Borden by Daylight.* New York: Putnam.

Lloyd, G. (1989). The man of reason. In A. Garry & M. Pearsall (Eds.), *Women, knowledge, and reality: Explorations in feminist philosophy* (pp. 111-128). Boston: Unwin Hyman.

Lorenz, K. (1966). The Psychobiological Approach. In J. Huxley (Ed.), *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society. Vol. 251: Ritualization of Behavior in Animals and Man. B.*

Lowie, R. (1931). Women and religion V. F. Calverton (Ed.), (pp. 744-757). New York: Random House.

Lubell, W. M. (1994). The Metamorphosis of Baubo: Myths of Women's Sexual Energy. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press.

Luker, K. (1984). Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Lumsden, C. J., & Wilson, E. O. (1981). Genes, Mind and Culture. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Luschen, M. E., & Pierce, D. (1972, February). Effect of the Menstrual Cycle on Mood and Sexual Arousability. Journal of Sex Research, pp. 41-47.

Macht, D. I. (1943). Further historical and experimental studies on menstrual toxin. American Journal of Medical Science, 206, 281-305.

Maclagan, D. (1967). *Creation Myths.* London: Thames and Hudson.

Maginnis, P., & Phelan, L. C. (1969). The Abortion Handbook. North Hollywood: Contact Books.

Malinowski, B. (1961). Argonauts of the Western Pacific. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc.

March, K. S. (1980). Deer, bears, and blood: A note on nonhuman animal response to menstrual odor. American Anthropologist, 82, 125-127.

Marett, R. R. (1914). The Threshold of Religion (2nd ed.). London: Methuen.

Margulis, L., & Sagan, D. (1986). Microcosmos: Four Billion Years of Microbial Evolution. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Marieskind, H. (1973, Spring). The Women's Health Movement. International Journal of Health Services, 5, 271-323.

Marieskind, H., & Ehrenreich, B. (1975, September-October). Toward Socialist Medicine: The Women's Health Movement. Social Policy, 38.

Marshack, A. (1972). The Roots of Civilization. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company.

Martin, E. (1987). The Woman in the Body: A Cultural Analysis of Reproduction. New York: Beacon Press.

Martin, E. (1990). Science and Women's Bodies: Forms of Anthropological Knowledge. In M. Jacobus, E. F. Keller & S. Shuttleworth (Eds.), Body/Politics: Women and the Discourses of Science (pp. 69-82). New York: Routledge.

Martin, T. R. (1996). Ancient Greece: From Prehistoric to Hellenistic Times. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Marx, K., & Engels, F. (1968). Selected Works in One Volume. New York: International Publishers.

Masters, W. H., & Johnson, V. E. (1966). Human Sexual Response. Boston: Little Brown.

Masters, W. H., & Johnson, V. E. (1970). Human Sexual Inadequacy. Boston: Little Brown.

Maurois, A. (1954). Leila: The Life of George Sand (G. Hopkins, Trans.). New York.

McClintock, M. K. (1971, January). Menstrual Synchrony and Suppression. Nature, 299(5282).

McClintock, M. K. (1981). Social control of the ovarian cycle and the function of estrous synchrony. American Zoologist, 21, 243-256.

Mead, M. (1967). Male and Female: A study of the sexes in a changing world. New York: William Marrow and Company.

Mead, M. (1970). Culture and Commitment: A Study of the Generation Gap (The American Museum of Natural History Special Members' Edition). Garden City: Natural History Press.

Mead, M. (1972). Women: A House Divided. In M. E. Adelstein & J. G. Pival (Eds.), Perspectives. Vol. 2: Women's Liberation. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Meador, B. (1986). The Thesmophoria: A Women's Ritual. Psychological Perspectives, 17(1), 92-107.

Meggitt, M. J. (1964). Male-female relationships in the Highlands of Australian New Guinea. American Anthropologist, 66(4), pt. 2:204-224.

Meier, F. (1971). The ultimate origin and the hereafter in Islam. In G. L. Tikku (Ed.), Islam and its cultural divergence (pp. 204-224). Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Menaker, W., & Menaker, A. (1959, April). American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology (Vol. 77, pp. 905-914).

The Menses Is the Message. (1972). Tits & Clits (Laguna Beach).

Menstrual health in women's lives. (1992) (A. Dan, J. & L. L. Lewis, Eds.). Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Metaphor and Thought. (1979) (A. Ortony, Ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Michelet, J. (1957). Joan of Arc. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Midgley, M. (1994, February 12). Letter to the Editor. New Scientist, p. 50.

Miles, R. (1989). The Women's History of the World. New York: Harper & Row.

Mishler, E. G. (1986). The analysis of interview--narratives. In T. R. Sarbin (Ed.), Narrative psychology: The storied nature of human conduct (pp. 233-255). New York: Praeger.

Mishler, E. G. (1986). Research interviewing: Context and narrative. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Mishler, E. G. (1990). Validation in inquiry-guided research: The role of exemplars in narrative studies. Harvard Educational Review, 60(4), 415-442.

Montagu, A. (1937). The Origin of Subincision in Australia. Oceania.

Montagu, A. (1953). The Natural Superiority of Women. New York.

Montgomery, R. E. (1974). A cross-cultural study of menstrual taboos, and related social variables. Ethos, 2, 137-170.

Moore, H. L. (1994). A passion for difference: Essays in anthropology and gender. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Morgan, E. (1972). The Descent of Woman. New York: Stein and Day.

Morin, E. (1982). From the Concept of System to the Paradigm of Complexity [Sean Kelly]. Journal of Social and Evolutionary Systems, 15(4), 371-385.

Morin, E. (1983, 1983). Social Paradigms of Scientific Knowledge. Sub-Stance, 39, 3-20.

Morin, E. (1992). Method: Towards a Study of Humankind Vol. 1.

Morin, E., & Kern, A. B. (1999). Homeland Earth: A Manifesto for the New Millennium (S. M. Kelly & R. LaPointe, Trans.). Cresskill: Hampton Press.

Motz, L. (1997). The Faces of the Goddess. New York: Oxford University Press.

Naismith, G. (1966). Private and Personal. New York: McKay.

Narayanan, V. (1999). Brimming with Bhakti, Embodiments of Shakti: Devotees, Deities, Performers, Reformers, and Other Women of Power in the Hindu Tradition. In A. Sharma & K. K. Young (Eds.), Feminism and World Religions (pp. 25-77). Albany: State University of New York Press.

Applied Social Research Methods Series. Vol. 47: Narrative Research: Reading, Analysis, and Interpretation. (1998) (A. Lieblich, R. Tuval-Mashiach, & T. Zilber, Eds.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Nature, culture and gender. (1980) (C. P. MacCormack & M. Strathern, Eds.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Neumann, E. (1971). The Origins and History of Consciousness (R. F. C. Hull, Trans.). Bollingen Series). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Neumann, E. (1974). The Great Mother: An Analysis of the Archetype (R. Manheim, Trans.). Bollingen Series XLVII). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

The New Jerusalem Bible. (1990). New York: Doubleday.

Novak, E. (1916). The Superstition and Folklore of Menstruation. Johns Hopkins Bulletin, 27.

On Metaphor. (1977) (S. Sacks, Ed.). Chicago: University Chicago Press.

Ortner, S. B. (1974). Is female to male as nature is to culture? In M. Rosaldo & L. Lamphere (Eds.), Woman, culture and society (pp. 67-87). Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Ortner, S. B., & Whitehead, H. (1981). Introduction: Accounting for sexual meanings. In S. B. Ortner & H. Whitehead (Eds.), Sexual Meanings (pp. 1-27). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Owen, L. (1993). Her Blood is Gold: Reclaiming the Power of Menstruation. London: HarperCollins.

The Oxford Classical Dictionary. (N. G. L. Hammond & H. H. Scullard, Eds.) (Second). (1970). Oxford: Clarendon Press.

O'Brien, M. (1981). The Politics of Reproduction. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Paige, K. E., & Paige, J. M. (1981). The politics of reproductive ritual. Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press.

Parker, P. (1983). Movement in Black: The Collected Poetry of Pat Parker. Trumansburg: Crossing Press.

Parlee, M. B. (1974, May-June). Stereotypic Beliefs about Menstruation: A Methodological Note on the Moos MDQ and some new data. Psychosomatic Medicine, 36(3).

Patterns and perceptions of menstruation; A World Health Organization international collaborative study in Egypt, India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Mexico, Pakistan, Philippines, Republic of Korea, United Kingdom and Yugoslavia. (1983) (R. Snowden & B. Christian, Eds.). New York: St. Martin's Press.

Petchesky, R. P. (1980). Reproductive Freedom: Beyond "A Woman's Right to Choose." In C. R. Stimpson & E. S. Person (Eds.), Women: Sex and Sexuality (pp. 92-116). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

The Philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead. (1951) (P. A. Schilpp, Ed.). New York: Tudor Publishing Company.

Pickles, V. R. (1974, June). "Menstrual toxin" again. The Lancet, 22, 1292-1293.

Pinker, S., & Bloom, P. (1990). Natural language and natural selection. Behavioral and Brain Sciences, 13, 704-784.

Pinker, S. (1994). The Language Instinct. New York: Morrow.

Pinker, S. (1998). How the Mind Works. London: Penguin.

Plato. (1980). The Collected Dialogues of Plato Including the Letters (E. Hamilton & H. Cairns, Eds.). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Pliny. (1942). Natural History (H. Rackham, Trans.) (Vol. 2, pp. books III-VII). London: Heinemann.

Plotkin, H. C. (1993). Darwin Machines and the Nature of Knowledge. London: Penguin.

The Politics of Women's Spirituality: Essays on the Rise of Spiritual Power within the Feminist Movement. (1982) (C. Spretnak, Ed.). Garden City: Anchor Press.

Pomeroy, S. B. (1975). Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity. New York: Schocken Books.

Poovey, M. (1990). Speaking of the Body: Mid-Victorian Constructions of Female Desire. In M. Jacobus, Evelyn Fox Keller & S. Shuttleworth (Eds.), Body/Politics: Women and the Discourses of Science (pp. 29-46). New York: Routledge.

The Power of Feminist Art: The American Movement of the 1970's. History and Impact. (1994) (N. Broude & M. D. Garrard, Eds.). New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc.

Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality. (1983) (A. Snitow, C. Stansell, & S. Thompson, Eds.). New York: Monthly Review Press.

Powers, M. (1980). Women: Sex and Sexuality (C. R. Stimpson & E. S. Person, Eds.) (pp. 117-128). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Powers, M. N. (1980). Menstruation and Reproduction: An Ogallala Case. In C. R. Stimpson & E. S. Person (Eds.), Women: Sex and Sexuality (pp. 117-128). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

The Proceedings of the Menstrual Extraction Conference. (1974) (Oakland Feminist Women's Health Center, Ed.).

Radcliffe-Brown, A. R. (1952). Structure and Function in Primitive Society. London: Cohen and West.

Rappaport, R. A. (1968). Pigs for the Ancestors. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Reik, T. (1931). Ritual: Psychoanalytic Studies. London: Hogarth Press.

Reik, T. (1964). Pagan Rites in Judaism. New York: Farrar and Straus.

Research & Forecasts, I. (1981). The Tampax Report. New York.

The Menstrual Cycle. Vol. 2: Research and Implications for Women's Health. (1981) (P. Komnenich, M. McSweeney, J. A. Noack, & N. Elder, Eds.). New York: Springer.

Rich, A. (1977). Of Woman Born. London: Virago Press.

Richman, C. L., Patty, R. A., & Fisher, T. D. (1976). Mind-body Revisited: Every 28 Days. Psychological Reports, 39, 1311-1314.

Ricœur, P. (1977). The Rule of Metaphor (Robert Czerny, Trans.). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Rierdan, J., & Koff, E. (1989). Representations of the female body by early and late adolescent girls. Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 9, 339-396.

Rierdan, J., & Koff, E. (1991). Depression symptomology among very early maturing girls. Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 20(4), 415-425.

Rierdan, J., Koff, E., & Stubbs, M. L. (1989). Timing of menarche, preparation, an initial menstrual experience: Replication and further analyses in a prospective study. Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 18(5), 413-425.

Riessman, C. K. (1993). Qualitative Research Methods Series. Vol. 30: Narrative Analysis (J. L. Hunter, Ed.). Newbury Park: Sage Publications.

Riger, S. (1992, June). Epistemological Debates, Feminist Voices: Social Values, and the Study of Women. American Psychologist, pp. 730-739.

Ritual, Play, and Performance. (1976) (R. Schechner & M. Schuman, Eds.). New York: Seabury Press.

Ritualization of Behavior in Animals and Man. (1966). In J. Huxley (Ed.), Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society (Vol. 251). B.

River, L., & Gillespie, S. (1987). The Knot of Time: Astrology and the Female Experience. New York: Harper & Row.

Robins, J. (1970). Handbook of Women's Liberation. North Hollywood: Now Library Press.

Roeske, R., K. D. (1980). Theoretical Perspectives on Menstrual Cycle Research: The Relevance of Attributional Approaches for the Perception and Explanation of Premenstrual Emotionality. In A. J. Dan, E. A. Grahm & C. P. Beecher (Eds.), The Menstrual Cycle (Vol. 1). New York: Springer.

Roheim, G. (1932). Psychoanalysis of Primitive Cultural Types. International Journal of Psychoanalysis, XIII.

Root, J. (1982, June). Only Women Bleed. Honey.

Rosen, R. (2000). The World Split Apart: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America. New York: Viking Penguin.

Rothman, L., & Punnett, L. (1978, Summer). Menstrual Extraction. Quest: A Feminist Quarterly, IV(3).

Rousseau. Emile.

Rush, A. K. (1976). Moon, Moon. New York: Random House.

Ruzek, S. B. (1978). The Women's Health Movement. New York: Praeger.

Ryan, M. P. (1975). Womanhood in America: From Colonial Times to the Present. New York: New Viewpoints.

Sanday, P. (1974). Female Status in the Public Domaine. In M. Rosaldo & L. Lamphere (Eds.), Woman, culture and society (pp. 189-206). Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Sanday, P. (1981). Female power and male dominance: On the origins of sexual inequality. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sarachild, K. (1975). Consciousness Raising: A Radical Weapon. In Redstockings (Ed.), Feminist Revolution (pp. 131-137). New York: Self-published.

Sayers, J. (1982). Biological Politics. London; New York: Tavistock.

Schwarzer, A. (1984). After The Second Sex: Conversations With Simone De Beauvoir (M. Howarth, Trans.). New York: Pantheon Books.

Seaman, B. (1972). Free and Female: The new sexual role of women. Greenwich: Fawecett Publications, Inc.

Secular Ritual: Forms and Meanings. (1977) (S. F. Moore & B. Myerhoff, Eds.). Assen: Van Gorcum.

Seizing Our Bodies: The Politics of Women's Health. (1977) (C. Dreifus, Ed.). New York: Random House.

Sherfey, M. J. (1970). A Theory of Female Sexuality. In R. Morgan (Ed.), Sisterhood is Powerful (p. 221). New York: Random House.

Sherfey, M. J. (1972). The Nature and Evolution of Female Sexuality. New York: Vintage Books.

Short, R. V. (1977). Control of Menstruation. In G. V. P. Chamberlain (Ed.), Contemporary Obstetrics and Gynecology. London: Northwood Publishers Ltd.

Shorter, E. (1983). The History of Women's Bodies. London: Allen Lane.

Shostak, M. (1983, Harvard University Press). Nisa: The Life and Words of a !Kung Woman (Cambridge). New York: Random House (Original work published 1981).

Showalter, E., & Showalter, E. (1970, Fall). Victorian Women and Menstruation: Victorian Studies.

Shuttle, P., & Redgrove, P. (1988). The Wise Wound: The Myths, Realities, and Meaning of Menstruation. New York: Grove Press.

Silberman, I. (1950). A Contribution to the Psychological of Menstruation. International Journal of Psychoanalysis, 31, 260.

Sjoo, M., & Mor, B. (1987). The Great Cosmic Mother: Rediscovering the Religion of the Earth. San Francisco: HarperSanFransisco.

Skandhan, K. P., Pandya, A. K., Skandhan, S., & Mehta, Y. B. (1979). Synchronization of menstruation among intimates and kindreds. Panminerva Medica, 21, 131-134.

Skultans, V. (1970). The symbolic significance of menstruation and the menopause. Man, n.s. 5, 639-651.

Smith Hilda. (1976). Gynaecology and Ideology in Seventieth Century England. In B. A. Carroll (Ed.), Liberating Women's History. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Smith, J. Z., & Wolcott, H. F. (1994). Transforming Qualitative Data. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Smith, J. A. (1995). Semi-Structured Interviewing and Qualitative Analysis. In J. A. Smith, R. Harre & L. Van Langenhorne (Eds.), Rethinking Methods in Psychology (pp. 10-26). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Snapshot. (1996, March/April). Ms (New York), 35.

Snow, L. F., & Johnson, S. M. (1977). Modern Day Menstrual Folklore: Some Clinical Implications. Journal of the American Medical Association, 237, 2736-2739.

Social Aspects of the Human Body. (1978) (T. Polhemus, Ed.). Harmondsworth: Penguin.

The Social Psychological Study of Widespread Beliefs. (1990) (C. Fraser & G. Gaskell, Eds.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sollberger, A. (1965). Biological Rhythm Research. London and New York: Elsevier.

Sommer, B. (1973, November). The effect of menstruation on cognitive and perceptual-motor behavior: A review. Psychosomatic Medicine, 35(6), 515-534.

Spretnak, C. (1991). States of Grace: The Recovery of Meaning in the Postmodern Age. New York: HarperCollins.

Spretnak, C. (1997). The Resurgence of the Real: Body, Nature, and Place in a Hypermodern World. Reading: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc.

Steiner, F. (1956). Taboo. Baltimore: Penguin.

Stephens, W. N. (1961). A cross-cultural study of menstrual taboos. Genetic Psychology Monographs, 64, 385-416.

Stephens, W. N. (1962). The Oedipus complex: Cross-cultural evidence. New York: Free Press.

Stephens, W. N. (1967). A cross-cultural study of menstrual taboos. In C. S. Ford (Ed.), Cross-cultural approaches: Readings in comparative research (pp. 67-94). New Haven: Human Relations Area Files Press.

Stewart, F. M. D., Guest, F., Stewart, G. M. D., & Hatcher, R. M. D. (1979). My Body, My Health: The Concerned Woman's Book of Gynecology. Toronto: Bantam Books.

Stewart, I. (2000). Sacred woman, sacred dance: Awakening spirituality through movement and ritual. Rochester: Inner Traditions International.

Stone, M. (1976). When God was a Woman. New York and London: Harcort Brace Jovanovich.

Strathern, M. (1972). Women in Between: Females roles in a male world. London: Seminar Press.

Strathern, M. (1980). No nature, no culture: The Hagan case. In C. P. MacCormack & M. Strathern (Eds.), Nature, culture and gender (pp. 174-222). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Swedenborg, E. (1984). The Universal Human and Soul-Body Interaction. In The Classics of Western Spirituality (G. F. Dole, Ed. & Trans). New York; Ramsey; Toronto: Paulist Press.

Sweester, E. (1990). From Etymology to Pragmatics: The Mind--as--Body Metaphor in Semantic Structure and Semantic Change. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tannahill, R. (1982). Sex in History. Briarcliff Manor: Stein and Day.

Tanner, N. M. (1981). On becoming human. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tarnas, R. (1991). The passion of the western mind: Understanding the ideas that have shaped our world view. New York: Ballantine Books.

Taylor, D. (1988). Red Flower: Rethinking Menstruation. Freedom: Crossing Press.

Testart, A. (1978). Des classification dualistes en Australie. Lille: Maison des Sciences de l'Homme.

Testart, A. (1986). Essai sur les fondements de la division sexuelle du travail chez les chasseurs-cueilleurs. Paris: Editions de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales.

Testart, A. (1988). Some major problems in the social anthropology of hunter-gatherers. Current Anthropology, 29, 1-31.

The World Fellowship Committee of the Tokyo Young Women's Christian Association. (1965). Japanese Etiquette: An Introduction. Rutland: The Charles E. Tuttle Company.

Thompson, A., & Thompson, J. O. (1987). Shakespeare: Meaning and Metaphor. Brighton: The Harvester Press.

To Be a Woman: The Birth of the Conscious Feminine. (1990) (C. Zweig, Ed.). Los Angeles: Tarcher.

Treichler, P. A. (1990). Feminism, Medicine, and the Meaning of Childbirth. In M. Jacobus, E. F. Keller & S. Shuttleworth (Eds.), Body/Politics: Women and the Discourses of Science (pp. 113-138). New York: Routledge.

Treneman, A. (1988). Cashing in on the Curse: Advertising and the menstrual taboo. In M. Marshment & L. Gamman (Eds.), The Female Gaze. London: Women's Press.

Trudge, C. (1995). The Day before Yesterday: Five Million Years of Human History. London: Cape.

Turnbull, C. M. (1972). The Mountain People. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Turner, M. (1987). Death is the Mother of Beauty: Mind, Metaphor, Criticism. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Turner, V. (1969). The ritual process: Structure and anti-structure. Chicago: Aldine.

Turner, V. (1977). Process, system and symbol: A new anthropological synthesis. Daedalus, 106(3), 61-80.

Vernant, J.-P. (1980). Myth and Society in Ancient Greece (J. Lloyd, Trans.). New York: Zone Books.

Voices from Women's Liberation. (1970) (L. Tanner, B., Ed.). New York: The New American Library, Inc.

Vollman, R. F. (1977). The Menstrual Cycle. Philadelphia: Saunders.

Vosselmann, F. (1935). La Menstruation: Légendes, Coutumes et Superstitions. Lyon.

Wade, N. (2001, February 13). Genome's Riddle: Few Genes, Much Complexity. New York Times (New York), D1, D4.

Walker, A. (1993, November/December). A Legacy Of Betrayal: Confronting the Evil Tradition of Female Genital Mutilation. Ms (New York), IV, 55-57.

Walker, B. G. (1996). The Women's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets. Edison: Castle Books.

Wandersee, W. D. (1988). On the Move: American Women in the 1970's. Boston: Twayne Publishers.

Wayland Barbara, E. (1994). Women's Work: The first 20,000 Years. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

Webster, H. (1942). Taboo: A Sociological Study. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Weideger, P. (1977). Menstruation and Menopause: The Physiology, and Psychology, the Myth and the Reality. New York: Delta.

When Birth Control Fails: How to Abort Ourselves Safely. (1979) (S. Gage, L. Rothman, & S. Sullaway, Eds.). San Diego: Speculum Press.

Whipple, B., Hartman, W. E., & Fithain, M. (1994). Orgasm. In V. L. Bullough & B. Bullough (Eds.), Human Sexuality: An Encyclopedia (pp. 430-433). New York: Garland Publishing, Inc.

Whisnant, L., & Zegans, L. (1975). A study of attitudes toward menarche in white middle-class American girls. American Journal of Psychiatry, 132, 815-820.

Whisnant, L., Brett, E., & Zegans, L. (1975). Implicit messages concerning menstruation in commercial educational materials prepared for young adolescent girls. American Journal of Psychiatry, 132, 815-820.

White, L., A. (1959). The Evolution of Culture. New York: McGraw Hill.

Whitehead, A. N. (1967). Adventures of Ideas. Toronto: Collier-Macmillan.

Whitehead, A. N. (1967). The Aims of Education and other essays. New York: The Free Press.

Whitehead, A. N. (1967). Science and the Modern World: Lowell Lectures, 1925. New York: The Free Press.

Whitehead, A. N. (1968). Modes of Thought. New York: The Free Press.

Whitehead, A. N. (1985). Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology. New York: The Free Press.

Widdershoven, G. A. M. (1993). The Story of Life: Hermeneutic Perspectives on the Relationship Between Narrative and Life History. In R. Josselson & A. Lieblich (Eds.), The Narrative Study of Lives (pp. 1-20). Newbury Park: Sage Publications.

Wilber, K. (1985). The Holographic Paradigm and Other Paradoxes. Boston: Shambala Books.

Wilber, K. (1998). The Marriage of Sense and Soul: Integrating Science and Religion. New York: Random House.

Wilford, J. N. (2000, Tuesday, August 15). The Secrets of Croesus' Gold: Archaeologists Learn How Ancient King Made His Money, Literally. New York Times (New York), National Edition, sec. Science Times, p. D1; D5.

Wilford, J. N. (2000, Friday/September). Splendid Maya Palace Is Found Hidden in Jungle. New York Times (New York), National ed., sec. International, p. A1; A6.

Wills, C. (1993). The Runaway Brain. New York: Basic Books.

Wilshire, D. (1989). Gender/Body/Knowledge (A. M. Jaggar & S. R. Bordo, Eds.) (pp. 92-114). New Brunswick: Rutger University Press.

Withorn, A. (1980). The Limits and Potential of Self-Help. Radical America, 14, 25-38.

Woman in Sexist Society: Studies in Power and Powerlessness. (1971) (V. Gornick & B. K. Moran, Eds.). New York: Times Mirror.

Women: Sex and Sexuality. (1980) (C. R. Stimpson & E. S. Person, Eds.). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Women's Health Care: A Guide to Alternatives. (1984) (K. Weiss, Ed.). Reston: Reston Publishing Company, Inc. A Prentice-Hall Company.

Perspectives. Vol. 2: Women's Liberation. (1972) (M. E. Adelstein & J. G. Pival, Eds.). New York: St. Martin's Press.

Women's Liberation: Blueprint for the Future. (1970) (S. Stambler, Ed.). New York: Ace Books.

Wood, C. T. (1981). The doctors' dilemma: Sin, salvation, and the menstrual cycle in medieval thought. Speculum, 56, 710-727.

Woolf, V. (1954). A Writer's Diary (Leonard Woolf, Ed.). New York: Harcourt, Brace.

Wu, Y. (1990). Chinese Philosophical Terms. San Francisco: Great Learning Publishing Company.

Wu, Y. (1998). I Ching - The Book of Changes and Virtues. San Bruno: Great Learning Publishing Company.

Young, F. W., & Bacdayan, A. A. (1967). Menstrual Taboos and Social Rigidity. In Ford-Clellan (Ed.), Cross-Cultural Approaches: Readings in Comparative Research. New Haven: HRAF Press.

Young, J. Z. (1971). An Introduction to the Study of Man. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Zosimos. The Visions of Zosimos (S. Taylor, Trans.). London: Taylor and Francis.